Interview with Ambassador Edward Richard Dudley

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

Ralph J. Bunch Legacy: Minority Officers

AMBASSADOR EDWARD RICHARD DUDLEY

Interviewed by: Celestine Tutt

Initial interview date: April 3, 1981

Q: This is an interview with the Judge Edward Richard Dudley, Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. Judge Dudley is a former U.S. Ambassador to Liberia, having served in that capacity from 1948 to 1953. He was a pioneer in the field of diplomacy and holds the distinction of having been the first black American to obtain the status of Ambassador in the United States Foreign Service. This interview is being sponsored by the Phelps-Stokes Fund as part of an oral history project on Black Chiefs of Mission. The interview is a first in a series. It is being held Friday April 3, 1981 at 60 Center Street, New York City. Celestine Tutt, interviewer.

Judge Dudley, could we begin by your telling us about the events which led to your entry into diplomatic service?

DUDLEY: Well, to begin with, 1948 was the year in which we were electing a new president of the United States and the then Minister to Liberia, Raphael O'Hara Lanier, former president at that time of one of the colleges of the state of Florida, felt that since the prognosis of us having a Republican president in the person of Governor Dewey might put him out of a job, he resigned and went back to Florida to pick up his educational work.

And it was at this time that Walter White and some of the political leaders in New York City were approached by the State Department for a candidate to go to Liberia. My previous experience at that time had been out of the country as counsel to the Governor to the Virgin Islands, and I think that is one of the things that may have led them to me. After receiving a request to consider this, I indicated that I would go and talk to my wife about it and I told her that we'd never been many places and it looked as though the job would be over by the end of the year. Dewey would be the next president and we'd be home by Christmas. I accepted the offer that came from the State Department in the summer of 1948. We took a ship and stopped along the way at Sierra Leone and some of the other West African countries, arriving in Liberia in the month of August and set up housekeeping at the Legation there.

There is a great deal that followed. Very shortly the election was held, as you know, and Dewey was not the president. We went to bed thinking that he would be on the eve of the election and we woke to find that Harry Truman was the president. Rather than stay a few months in Africa, as planned, we stayed five years. And that's the background as to how we got there and stayed so long.

Q: What were your first impressions of Liberia?

DUDLEY: Rather wonderful. As the boat docked on that very bright morning and the two of us were standing at the rail at this very new harbor facility which the United States had built in Liberia, we saw thousands of people, stevedores, visitors, working people, native people and people that we hadn't seen before in terms of the manner in which people were having their breakfast, how the women would carry the bananas in big bunches on their heads.

The weather was excellent, and, all in all, I suppose it was rather an exhilarating experience and we felt very good about it, that this was the place we were landing and would be living for quite a while and we could see the new frontier opening up. We felt

very happy about landing there at that particular time, plus the fact that we had a job with the United States Government and it gave us a sort of sense of security. The staff at the Legation was down to the boat and they welcomed us.

A rather peculiar and funny incident did happen. My wife had been a school teacher all of her life and we were both rather young at. this time. I suppose I was in my middle thirties, and a big stout, 6 foot, 300-pound fellow who was a stevedore came up to us (he had known we were coming apparently) and said to my wife, “Mrs. Dudley, I think you used to teach me in school.” And we had a big laugh about that, but any fears that we might have had shortly subsided and we got on with the business of meeting the new staff and transferring the baggage to the station wagons and getting en route to our Legation.

In very short order, as I recall, I met the people. We had a few staff conferences and I was given some orientation because this was my first experience in a State Department post, despite the fact that I had been briefed for many weeks in Washington before I left and had had other foreign experience. It had been with the Interior Department rather than with the State Department. And that's how we got started that first week.

Shortly thereafter we engaged in the task of diplomacy, which means that you write the notes to the Chief of your country in which you're assigned, and you get in touch with the other members of the diplomatic corps. You pay your courtesy calls. You set up your schedule for your business calls. Before we left home, we had, we thought, all of the new regiment that this required, including the top hat and the tails which Liberians wore at that time, the stripped pants.

In the countries mostly out of the United States, and probably the major Western countries of the world, the diplomatic corps is pretty important business. There's a parade, the troops are brought out, and you review the troops. This is “big diggins” you might say, in small countries, and all of a sudden you are catapulted into this kind of thing and you do the best you can. I happen to feel that over the next several years we made an impact upon them

and they made an impact upon us. In addition to the diplomatic mission that we had there, we had over a hundred persons engaged in what was known as the Point Four Program, and I suppose you'll want to know something about that as well.

We had a man from Maryland by the name of Oscar Myer. Oscar Myer and his wife were head of the Point Four Program in Liberia. Now, the Point Four Program, interestingly enough, comes about as a result of the fourth paragraph in President Truman's inaugural address. And it was in that paragraph of the speech that he talked in terms of carrying out a small Marshall Plan to many of the other countries of the world (they're now called the third world countries) where the need was even greater. And therefore we designed a program based on four main premises — agriculture, education, public health and engineering — because we felt that in these four areas we could pretty much cover the needs of any of the third world countries at that time.

Therefore, the Chief of Mission of the American Government, the United States Minister, had as his opposite number in setting this plan up, the Secretary of State of Liberia. At that time a man by the name of Gabriel Dennis was the Secretary of State and he and I held the first meetings in putting together what was later to become a very fine operating Point Four Program with the particular subjects that we've just mentioned.

The Liberians had opposite numbers in each of these areas; we had specialists. We had brought in an agricultural man by the name of Frank Pinda from the United States to head up the agriculture program. Dr. John West, who had served in Ethiopia years before at the behest of President Roosevelt, was brought to Liberia to head up the public health program. And one Edward Brise headed up the educational program. The engineering program was headed by a man by the name of Granville Woodson, who was on leave from the Department of Education in Washington, DC as Assistant Superintendent for Education in the Structural Area.

Now, as we conducted our meetings in depth, we would go down probably fifteen or twenty persons on the United States side as aides to the particular head of his area and the Liberians would provide as many as they could for our training purposes.

And in short order we began to get into such programs as the improved cultivation of rice in the agriculture program; we would bring in new methods; we would bring in and introduce new strains of rice that we thought would fit the climate there. In the engineering area, almost immediately we began to tackle mosquito control and our sanitary engineers stepped right out front, because we recognized early on that if we were not able to preserve a climate wherein we could do what we wanted to do in a sanitary situation, then we would be at a great disadvantage.

This was a forerunner, of course, to many other projects in this area, such as the building of roads and buildings and culverts, etc, to carry water. So we moved on into the educational areas, wherein the kindergarten schools were set up. In the public health area, nurses training schools were planned and staffed, and young girls would train right on through the entire gamut of programming which we carried on with the Liberians. We found that this was one of the top priorities that we would have in any country in the next several years. We had some problems, of course, from year to year with Congress. The name of the Point Four Program was constantly being changed; the amount of money that we were to get was changing also. And interestingly enough, after the five-year period, when the new Administration came in, the program was almost cut back completely and the emphasis went on the military. Of course, this is another story that we may get to later on.

Q: Shortly after you got to Liberia as Minister, the offices there, the U.S. offices, were upgraded to Embassy status. What factors led to that upgrading?

DUDLEY: Well, there had been a president of Liberia many years before by the name of King. C.D.B. King at that time was then my counterpart in Washington, DC. He was a

minister assigned by Liberia to represent their government in Washington. And on more than one occasion, when our paths would cross, former President King, then Liberian Minister, would say to me, “The world is changing. Why don't we put forward some effort and try and change our basic mission from a Legation to an Embassy?” Well, I was not in the beginning necessarily interested in pushing this. There were no embassies in Liberia at that time and I was familiar with American policy with respect to this, and throughout the world there were many countries in which there were no embassies. There's very little difference between the Legation and Embassy except in terms of status. They both do the same work. But I believe Switzerland, as late as that time, also had no embassies at all; they all had legations.

But, nevertheless, President King, on one of his trips to Washington urged the United States Government to consider raising the level of its legation in Liberia to an embassy. And after several months this was done simultaneously. The Liberian Legation in Washington was raised to an Embassy and former President King then became an ambassador, and the American Legation in Liberia was raised to an Embassy and its Minister, Edward R. Dudley, became an ambassador. And it is in this fashion that I probably became the first ambassador that Liberia ever had.

At that time there were many other countries that had representatives there. There was the French Legation, there was the British Legation, Lebanese Legation, Haitian Legation, and the dean of the diplomatic corps invariably was a position of rank. It went not necessarily to one who had seniority in the country, but seniority and rank.

Prior to that time, the British probably had the rank and the British representative was the dean of the diplomatic corps. Nevertheless, when the United States raised its mission to that of an embassy and its representative to that of an ambassador, the Ambassador, being the highest in rank in the country, then immediately became the dean of the corps. And this mantle fell upon my shoulders. It was a very interesting one because, here again, in this kind of country, almost daily, certainly weekly, there were occasions where the

diplomatic corps was called to appear with the President and his Cabinet at the cutting of a ribbon, in the opening of a building, of the opening of a new bridge or some kind of facility, and the dean was expected to make a few appropriate remarks. It was my custom to have something put together, either by myself or a member of my staff, depending upon the occasion, and this I would check with the Minister from the British Legation and the French, and one or two others who happened to be around, (we had a small corps at that time) to find out if they felt it was proper because, after all, I was speaking for the entire diplomatic corps.

But seldom did they ever want to change anything that we had put together, or add anything to it. In fact, I got the feeling that they were happy that I was doing it and not them. In fact, the British Minister had been a former prize fighter and had many, many years of service in India before he was assigned to Liberia. We had a very cordial relationship, a very fine relationship with all of the members of the diplomatic corps and a very interesting sojourn during the period that I was there .

Q: You mentioned something about U.S. policy towards Liberia. How would you describe U.S. policy toward Liberia at that time?

DUDLEY: Well, interestingly enough, Liberia was born back in 1849, the former slaves having gone over in 1822. Beginning from 1822, this country was always considered more or less a ward of the United-States and the United States guaranteed its borders. It got wealthy Americans to furnish ships for the freed men to go back over (the ex-slaves and women) to that country. Despite this, over the years, the United States did very little in the way of help other than to secure the country. In fact, I think that up until the 20th century, the only real monetary assistance that was granted to Liberia in an economic way was a five-million-dollar loan by the Firestone Plantation Company. Firestone had the largest rubber plantation in the world in Liberia at one time.

However, you must remember that during this early period there was not too much interest in the continent of Africa by the United States. We were going through all kinds of problems with Europe, through wars, stabilizing our own country, the Civil War, World War I, and so forth. And Africa was undergoing what we came to know as colonialism. Of the scores and scores of countries there now, there were only two north of the so-called Union that were independent and that was Ethiopia and Liberia. And these countries - Ethiopia was run during the time that I knew it by Haile Selassie. Liberia was known as the ward of the United States, a ward without substantive support.

But there were no problems for the United States in these particular areas. The problems came about as the result of the desires and quest of the African people for a greater participation in their government, for freedom, for understanding, for help in moving into the 20th century, and, therefore, it was necessary to have a policy. Now during that period of time, the United States had a series of the of so-called area conferences throughout the world. They had always had them in Europe and I found out that they had had one in Asia. Up until then, they had not had one in South America or Africa. And at these conferences the State Department — they were sponsored by the State Department — the State Department would bring together all of its representatives in a particular geographical area for a big meeting which might last four-five days, and they would bring specialists in from Washington from various departments: Commerce, State Department and others that would be interested. They would have discussions with the people from America who were represented on the local area.

Now these people, in the case of Europe, would be mostly diplomats and consular officials. In Africa, they were mostly consular officials, since you did not have diplomatic status in any of the colonial areas. You only had diplomatic status, mind you, in Liberia and Ethiopia, other than the Union. So, if we were talking about the Belgian Congo or Libya, or Nigeria, we were talking to our people as Consul-General, Consul-General.

Now, we found out that the State Department had money for these kind of meetings and we made a request to have one such meeting in Africa in order that we could talk about policy and we could help to formulate the policy. We recognized that there was a need for bringing the policy up-to-date. The man who was Assistant Secretary of State, orwhat we called at that time, NEA, Near Eastern and African Affairs (that was the name of the bureau at that time) was George McGee. George McGee was a man of great vision and understanding, and a young man. George McGee and I probably were around the same age — about thirty-seven years of age. We made an appeal to him to set up a continental conference in Africa, and he did.

This conference was set up in Mozambique on the Indian Ocean in Lourenco Marques, which is the capital of Mozambique. All of us traveled there, all of us being the Ambassador from Ethiopia, (the Minister from Ethiopia), myself from Liberia and the various consuls general throughout Africa, making probably thirty-five, forty staff people from Africa itself to meet with the experts who came from Washington. This gave us an opportunity — on my staff I took with me Eugene Sawyer, who was my public information officer — to see some parts of Africa that we would not have seen otherwise. We traveled to the Belgian Congo first en route to Mozambique and from Belgian Congo to Johannesburg, South Africa, back in 1950, at a time when blacks were not admitted into South Africa from the outside.

Q: Any special problems?

DUDLEY: We had some problems, some rather funny problems. For example, in coming into the country through Immigration, we were each asked our nationality and the two of us indicated that we were American Negroes, whereupon the Immigration officer immediately wrote down “white,” and we gathered that the law was that no Negroes could come into South Africa. If he was going to let us in, we had to be white. And we found later, of course, that the word had gone forward through diplomatic channels that we were to come in with our State Department colleagues and pass through the country en

route to Mozambique. It was en route, but we decided that, since we had to be there, we would stop off at our Embassy and get briefed and see what we could see in South Africa. We were treated with kid gloves in Johannesburg until we made a trip into one of the gold mines and there we found that they mine gold very much as we mine coal here — 500 and more feet down in the ground — and they bring the Africans from far and near and they work them there for about six months, and they wear out. a man in about six months, it seemed to us. But at any rate, we were visiting the gold mining areas when a superintendent came up and invited us out, saying that we had no business there and we would probably be spies and writing about it and so forth and so on.

Despite our protest, we were ushered out of the gold mining area and we returned to our Embassy and arranged a meeting with some of the black people that night. The next morning we went on to Lourenco Marques by car because we wanted to see the countryside, about 600 miles. In so doing, we went to an area called Kruger National Park, which is a national game preserve, a very famous one, and we took motion pictures en route to Lourenco Marques. It was here that we began to talk and make policy. George McGee, as I said, was rather an enlightened individual, our secretary, and some interesting things happened there.

The American representative in South Africa who attended the conference made the statement that the black Africans who were working in South Africa, particularly in mines, were as well off, if not better off, than the average Foreign Service officers. Well, all of us knew that this was ridiculous and we ,jumped all over him about the statement, and we got in all kinds of arguments at our meeting. But it finally settled down and we began to hammer out policy, and I was put on the committee to work on the policy statement as to ,just what the American policy should be towards Africa. We haggled half the night over words as to whether we would say that we are behind the legitimate political and economic aims and aspirations of the African people, language of this kind, which had never really been used before in standing up for Africans.

In fact, when George McGee returned and made a speech in Chicago about this, and included some of the statements in the speech, I understand that the French objected and protested to the United States Government. Apparently, the reason for that protest was that they felt that we were down there rocking the boat and it would disturb their colonies, because this was a time when the British, the French, the Belgians and, to a small extent, the Spanish, were down there with colonies. Also, at this time the Germans were out because of World War I; they had been divested of their colonies. The French undoubtedly were very sensitive about any movement that might stir up the African desire for freedom; consequently, any speech that the U.S. made or any policy that became public was scrutinized very carefully. And, therefore, I was very pleased to have been a part of this and to have tried to channel some of my own country's thinking into a rightful path.

This became then the new policy of the United States towards Africa, that we would then begin to sponsor their legitimate economic political aims and aspirations, and we did. We then began to see and help, as we could, the nations emerge. The first nation that got its independence was Libya, and Libya is always in the news today and generally not on the side of the United States. But that was one of the first African nations following this point conference to get its independence at that time.

Later on, during the Kennedy Administration, I had some opportunity to make a great deal of comment on what our policy towards Africa should be. I was invited to participate on a committee and I made many suggestions. I have copies of some of the material. I don't have all the questions that were asked of me, but we talked about advancing regionalism in Africa, which was such a large and varied continent that we felt that regional areas could help them along faster, not only in communication but in agriculture and other forms of economy. There was the Eastern bloc; it could be the Western bloc, the Northern, the Central and so forth .

So when the Kennedys were in, they began to sponsor some of the regional conferences among Africans themselves and to help them to move ahead. We were instrumental, I felt, with our staff in influencing, although a very small country, insignificantly small, in terms of its population, about a million people in all of Liberia, when countries all around it had a population of 40 million: 7 million in Ghana; 50 million in Nigeria, and so forth. But we did have an opportunity to have some impact on our own country's understanding of that continent.

Q: Could you - I think you've probably talked a little about it - but could you describe the political climate in Liberia?

DUDLEY: Yes. At that time that I was there, there was and had been for several years, a president by the name of William V. S. Tubman. Tubman was a very bright and smart politician. He was also a minister, I think. The people by and large believed in him. He had succeeded to the presidency from Ambassador King and they had patterned their government some, somewhat after our own. They had a constitution; there was four-year election of a president; there was a senate and a House of Assembly, very much like the American Government. And the political climate was what you might call a benign dictatorship. I can give you some examples of that.

The government didn't brook much interference from persons who wanted to set up other political parties, or political interference in any fashion at all. But the government did everything in its power — in its limited power — to aid young boys and young girls from the tribal areas to get an education, to go to school , even so far as to send them abroad to Switzerland, England, France and the United States.

While a tight rein was held on the political side of Liberia, a rather relaxed and far-reaching approach to the economic and the cultural side was permitted. And therefore, I would say that the government was not too unlike many that we have found in South America today.

Now it wasn't a military government as such, but the government controlled the military that they had, such as they did have, and there wasn't too much. In fact, on one occasion the President called me in and asked if I would try and have my government advance a small military mission for the purpose of training their border troops. There had been some squirmishes along one of their borders — with French Guinea, for example. On one of my trips back to the United States, I put the request in through the State Department and nothing happened. I asked for an appointment at the White House to speak with the President, and this was set up. The reason nothing happened, I think, is because whenever a request of this nature would be presented to our government, it was always sent around to the various appropriate agencies to find out what they have to say about it. And this request went to the Secretary of the Army. A man by the name of Kenneth Royall was Secretary of the Army at that time, and Royall was from North Carolina. Apparently they had no interest in sending any military mission to Liberia even though what we were talking about was probably less than a dozen people, a few jeeps and tents, and side arms and that kind of thing.

Nevertheless, it had been turned down and it is at this point that I went to the White House and talked to President Truman. I gave him the regards of President Tubman, as we generally do when we come back from the country, and then I stated my mission. And I said to him that I felt that we should have it; the only purpose was to train these people along the border and it would be an exceedingly small mission from our point of view — we were talking probably about $250,000. The President got up from his desk and walked around with his hands in his pocket and said, “ I don't see why you don't have it.” He said, “I'm going to send a memorandum to the State Department tomorrow.” Well, the next day I went back to the State Department and all hell broke loose. There were telephone calls, “Who .was it that went over the heads of the State Department to go to the White House and get this military mission?” Well, obviously, I told them, “Be sure and tell them I did it because I was appointed by the President. The State Department didn't appoint me.” And that soon blew over. Within the next six months we had a small military mission out

there with a captain, a couple of lieutenants and sergeant, a few men, and they did bring their jeeps and what arms they needed. They moved on up-country and they set up an American military mission for training purposes only.

And this is the way we got things done. And the little things such as this would endear a country to you. Liberia has always described the United States as being America's next best friend. That's a phrase that they always used. And if you go to a cocktail party or someplace, it invariably comes up: “You know, Liberia is America's next best friend,” meaning that we could always count on them and so forth and so on. And we could!

In the United Nations, after it was developed, the agreements that were put forth that were global and world-wide were generally accepted. There was the agreement on what we call GATT (General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs). We would talk to the Liberians about it and invariably they would vote with us on these kinds of things. This is how you put diplomacy together in doing little things, and I'm sure that their counterpart in Washington did some of the same kind of things, although we didn't need that kind of help but we needed other kinds of help.

So it's quid pro quo; it's one hand washing the other. We always made it very clear that while we were helping them to improve their agriculture, to improve the engineering status of the country, to help with the public health and so forth and so on, and education, that we were getting something out of it too. Here again President Truman made it very clear to me one day. He was talking about third world countries, and he said, “You know one thing, if you could keep the mills of New England running for a hundred years, you could add one inch to the shirttail of every Chinaman in the world.” Now, what he meant by that was that if we could send motors, and iceboxes and things over there to Africa, and get those people educated and brought into the 20th century, that we could keep our mills running and keep sending ice-boxes and shirts and things.

So therefore it's a two-edge sword. Our trade would jump tremendously, and it has over the years as we have dealt with the peoples of the world. Right now, interestingly enough, however, the Japanese have moved on top and they have taken over the balance of trade with us, particularly in the automobile industry. But that's about all I have to say on that particular topic on what was our political situation there. That's how we felt about them. (END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1)

Q: Today is April 13, 1981. Judge Dudley, you've mentioned that when you moved from Minister to Ambassador, there were some differences in your position. Other things remained the same. Could you elaborate on that?

DUDLEY: Well, yes. There is very little difference between the function of a legation and the function of an embassy. In fact, when the name change came that's all that came. We got no additional money, there was no additional personnel, nor were there any additional assignments that we were put on. The basic purpose of a diplomatic mission, whether one of a legation or an embassy, is twofold. The bottom line of either operation is a consular service and here you have a series of men and women who deal with the goods of your country and their country and with the immigration problems, and so forth and so on. In addition to that, you have your diplomatic officers, and the second major function is a gathering of information. Pretty soon if you are in a country, let's say you start from scratch, you'll know where every television set in the country is, and where every store that sells shoes and every sheet and everything else, and that information is brought back to our country and is put into our Commerce Department and is made available to our people who might want to do business.

Nevertheless, there is this distinction. There is a perceived notion that an ambassador is a higher rank and therefore a more important person to deal with. It's sort of like dealing with probably the dean of the college and then the president of the college. People who are interested in getting favors bestowed, for example, would want to talk to the president, would go as high as they could, and therefore, if one was an ambassador, there was

probably a feeling that this man was a true representative of the country. Many people don't even know the significance of what is meant by minister. In fact, in my earlier days when I was introduced as Minister Dudley, they'd want to know what church I was from. Now on the other hand, when you talk about ambassador, I was speaking to a group down in New Jersey and one school teacher introduced me as His Royal Highness. So there's a great deal of confusion about this, but there is a difference and the difference is primarily one of degree rather than substance.

Q: How were you perceived by your peers, that is, other U.S. ambassadors, since you were the first black ambassador?

DUDLEY: In many instances, in a small country such as I've just described, with relief that you are going to be the one who's going to be out front and take the brunt and make the speeches and do the work, in that sense. On the other hand, there is very little difference in how you are treated, because if you get a .change in status during an assignment, as I did, you've already, number one, established the position of yourself and your government and made the kind of contacts that you need, and this does not change. You get congratulatory messages and that kind of thing, but I do not, again, believe that the substance of the relationship is changed to any degree.

Q: What were some of the problems you faced as ambassador to Liberia? What were they?

DUDLEY: Well, there were problems and there're always problems in an area, and some can be rather serious. The problems were twofold here again. Having a large number of your country's nationals in another country in itself presents a problem. It presents a problem because in every barrel of apples you've got some that don't know quite how to adjust. You have the personal problems that you must deal with; the problems of some of the Americans getting into difficulty whether they intend to or not; you get the problem of

feelings being ruffled; of wrong things being said; and invariably these are the problems that you must unravel. These would only surface in a small country.

Let me give you an example. In our Point Four Program at one stage, we had a man in charge by the name of Reed Hill. Reed Hill was a very fine man sent over by the State Department to head up this entire Point Four Program. He was the director, let's say, over the engineers, the educators, the public health people and the agricultural people. He's the director of the mission and my lieutenant, and right under me. Now Reed Hill was a professional, had a great deal of experience that he brought, but he did not have a projecting personality. As a result, he was constantly being misunderstood by the Liberian people on the Cabinet and middle level, so much so that on one occasion he got into a rather heated discussion with some of the Liberian people, and they resented it. If this had happened in the United States, there would have been nothing to it. But Hill made some rather sharp remarks to the people over there and the next thing that I knew, I got a letter from the Secretary of State indicating that Reed Hill was persona non grata. Now, this kind of thing would probably be unheard of in America, but the Secretary of State over there had cleared this with the President before he sent the letter to me. Our President wouldn't get involved in this kind of thing, I don't believe.

Nevertheless, I went back to the Secretary of State and I indicated to him that I did not view it in the same serious light that he did. Further, that I had never lost a man on the grounds that he was persona non g rata and I wasn't about to begin losing one at that point. And we talked and we discussed it, and we talked.

Finally, when I found an unyielding attitude around this subject matter, I indicated that I would recommend to my government that Mr. Hill be transferred to another country provided they first withdrew the letter declaring him persona non grata. And it was on that basis that after nearly a half-a-day's discussion that I went back to the Embassy and drafted a telegram to the United States in which I indicated everything that had happened that built up to it; that despite my views on it, I felt the best program would be to move Mr.

Hill and send someone else in; and that we would not have on our record the fact that anyone had ever been declared persona non grata. Because the last word was up to them anyway, since they could always put people out of their country, as we can here. And we often do.

It was then that they transferred Mr. Hill to Afghanistan, and the next day I received a cable from the State Department asking if I would consider a man for his spot who was 64 years old, and they gave me the man's name — John W. Davis. I had known Dr. Davis by reputation. Dr. Davis had just at that point retired as president of West Virginia State College. I immediately cabled back and indicated that we'd be very happy to have Dr. Davis out there; and they sent Dr. John W. Davis out. He finished out the term there. Incidentally, Dr. Davis later came back and became part of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Legal Defense Fund and just died last fall at the age of 91. He had a marvelous career.

But these are the kind of problems that you have. Other problems you have with your own people. There was a strike at the Firestone Plantation. Now here is an area in which the Americans were controlling completely. There were thirty square miles of rubber trees, if you can envision that. Thirty square miles. They had a strike and they were burning down some of the rubber; they couldn't come to terms and it was getting out of hand. It was my job at that point when I couldn't do any better than to alert the troops in Port Leone, which is up in North Africa, in case we had to come in to protect our people. These are some of the problems that you have and that I did.

Things could get so bad that you would have to evacuate women and children first, and so forth and so on. It never got to that point. In fact, we never even brought the troops in because we were able to quell and quash the disturbance. The Liberian Government was able to, with our advice and our insistence. These are some of the problems. Your problems can be of any kind and of any nature The same kinds of problems that you would have in your own country. You could have the same kind of problems abroad except that

you're more limited in your ability to deal with the problems. We didn't have any problems other than what I was telling you earlier with our own staff. A few personal problems, but basically it was an interesting assignment. It was a productive assignment and from day to day we could see the changes from their point of view. We could see the impact from our point of view, in all of these areas that I've been talking about, in addition to the diplomatic areas which there's not much talked about.

Actually, if you're gathering information in someone's country, you don't go and publicize to the newspapers and say I just found out how many cattle you got over here in the field. There are thousands of these kind of communications that go back and forth, back and forth all the time, and things that are rather patent and what not, other cultural things, things that we do to help one another. If you're in a country that's involved with a Marshall Plan or a Point Four, you're in one that's really a live-wire country, because you have so many of your own professionals there working with you in their own endeavors, and so forth and so on, that every day there's something interesting going on.

Q: As a Black American or an ambassador of color, do you feel that you suffered any hardships or difficulties in these positions because of your color?

DUDLEY: I don't think so. There're two schools of thought on this. There's one that Black Americans should not be sent as Chiefs of Mission, and I'm talking about at that particular time, and that was because it was felt, and, mistakenly I think, by the people in the country to which you were sent that the treatment of Americans of color was such that they would not be in a position to give maximum effect to the needs of the country to which you were assigned. In other words, they didn't think that the Black American was sufficiently high on the totem pole in order to get them loans at the bank if they needed them, to get them the trade contracts that they needed, because at that time they were not able to see visible blacks in positions of power in this country.

Now there is another school of thought also that blacks in countries of their own racial origins, and this would be true of Latins too, that they would quickly make more friends and therefore get that country more on the side of the United States, so to speak, quicker than if someone else went who was a total stranger to these kind of people. I don't know whether I'm making myself clear or not, but I think Kissinger, who was in the Middle East, was able to take some of the fears that Israel might have had very quickly, than if he had been, say, Caucasian from the South, or even a black. Now obviously we can't base our representation on that and we shouldn't, but this has something to do because it does come up, and it's up to us to determine which is the best.

I think we should send people irrespective of their race, creed or color. But I recognize that sometimes if .you send a woman into a place — let's say, into a conference or something — or send a young fellow rather than a senior citizen, you may be doing something that's very carefully done and the only way you can do it is when you have the power of appointment. You certainly can't be part of any merit system. If we all had to take an examination, let's say, as to who would go down and run the railroad and the first ten people who came out on that list would go down and run the railroad despite whether they were coal miners or this or that or the other. And that's the way our country's moving, and that's the way I think it should move.

But since you asked me these questions, I must tell you that you have that attitude in some countries and we have to face it. We are facing it in this country today because of what the Arab nations have done with respect to the Jews. They have absolutely refused in many areas to permit the Jews to come in, in many of the work capacities there. And, of course, this is wrong because they have gone too far in this kind of thing. But we don't have a large Arab population here, educated and part of our government and what not. My point here is that if we did, there would be nothing wrong, as we have just done, in sending one of Mexican background to Mexico. But I don't advocate that. I'm not advocating that. Because if I did that, they would say there's no point in sending any blacks to Europe.

I want you to understand in what context I'm making this statement. But it is something that creates discussion and has to be dealt with. And we dealt with it there and in our discussion with the people of those governments. We give them the American point of view, that we're a democracy and that we believe that everyone is entitled to an inalienable right to his place in the sun. And we talk about equality and what it means; and we talk in terms of our own laws which say that we cannot do certain things if they're based on religion or race or national origin, and so forth and so on. But you still have to deal with the problem.

Q: Do you feel that you enjoyed any special advantages being a black ambassador in a black country?

DUDLEY: I think so. Just as here in this country affirmative action has pushed some blacks to the top, certainly in private industry, probably faster than they would have gotten. Not fast enough because we've been a couple of hundred years when nobody was permitted into these sacred portals. But on the other hand, if ten persons come out of Harvard University and one's a black man, I can tell you now that black man will get a real top job because he is black. It goes back right here to the so-called token woman and that kind of thing, so there are those kinds of advantage. On the other hand, if you're dealing with white America you run into all kinds of things. I used to come back here on consultations and invariably I would be moving around in a circle with nothing but white people. I'd be introduced as Ambassador to Liberia, and none of them would ever hear that because they would turn to me and ask me, “How do you like our country?” — talking about America — and so forth and so on. You always get this sort of thing, because the fact of the matter was they could never conceive that a black man could ever be an ambassador. So when someone is talking about this, they don't hear that — that you're the American Ambassador. In fact, they just simply introduce you as Ambassador to Liberia, but they don't hear that. They think you're from there; they miss that. “Oh, I

misunderstood," they'd say. I've had that happen any number of times, so I think there are advantages there.

There was no particular advantage to us in having me at that time in Liberia, because, as I will point out to you at some time in our discussion, for years only blacks had been sent there and this was not breaking any new ground at all. In fact, it would have been breaking some new ground if I had been sent to Romania, Barbados or Spain or someplace. So from that point of view, there was no advantage to us. It was an advantage to me personally. It certainly was a boost, an ego trip for me in my own career, obviously, to become United States ambassador anywhere. So I was extremely pleased for the opportunity, but that's about the only real advantage that I could see.

Q: Judge Dudley, you've mentioned that for many years only blacks had been sent, or just about only, had been sent to a black area. Before we formally started the interview you discussed a document, a study that you had carried out of blacks in the Foreign Service. Would you like to talk about that now or hold it to another session?

DUDLEY: Well, I think we could talk about it briefly now and describe it. And what I'm going to do and while I can't put it all on tape, I'm going to get you a copy of this memorandum of mine and give it to you for whatever purpose that you may see fit to use it. In fact, shortly after I arrived in Liberia, where we had a white charge d'affaires, since the previous minister had left the country. I found that a very unhappy situation existed in that the leading black Foreign Service officer there had never had the opportunity of serving anywhere else in the world, despite the fact that it was a policy of our State Department to rotate Foreign Service officers about every two years, and in four and five different posts for various reasons. Number one, it was felt that you would get a better prepared and more well-rounded Foreign Service officer if you gave him this kind of varied experience. And number two, it would certainly assist him in his own career in moving up a very tight ladder which they call the FSO's.

There is the elite corps of the State Department, the Foreign Service officer, and that's different from the other career services there. These are the so-called professional diplomats and the corps from which they are drawn. Despite the fact that we had scores of black people — men and women — in both the Foreign Service Officer corps and in the other areas of government such as secretaries, clerks, other people, none had ever gotten outside of a little triumvirate there that we called Monrovia, Ponta Delgada and Madagascar — all black, hardship, disagreeable posts.

This had been going on for year after year after year, after year. Some very brilliant people among the blacks wound up in the Foreign Service. I am reminded of one man by the name of Rupert Lloyd, a graduate of Williams College, who had been serving in the Foreign Service when I got there at Monrovia for almost ten years. Another fellow, William George, who had just moved over to one of the other hardship posts, but his brother was still there, John George. There had been one woman they told me who had been there for almost twenty-five years. She'd gone when I got there. Another one for seventeen years. So I decided to check into it and I got the staff to prepare some research on it, and I did some myself. We put together a memorandum which was a statement documenting every black in the Foreign Service over a long period of years: where they were; when they came into the service; how long they had been in; and, the fact that they had never been transferred. And next to that we added a class of white Foreign Service officers that we took from the register who came in at the same time as Rupert Lloyd came in and we showed where they had been. In every instance, they had had four, five, six transfers and had been in three, four and five different posts throughout the world, and very few hardship posts.

Well, right away you would know that there was something wrong and it didn't take a Philadelphia lawyer to tell me that something was wrong because my entire background had been with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and I knew exactly what to do.

We documented this case and on one of my trips to Washington I asked for an audience with the Under Secretary of State, a man by the name of John Peurifoy. I went to see Mr. Peurifoy and I gave him a copy of my memorandum and sat in his office while he read it. And he was visibly disturbed and asked me what I intended to do with it. My response was that I was bringing it to his attention because it was his responsibility to correct what was not only an unwholesome situation but, in my judgment, an illegal situation since the Foreign Service Act had indicated that discrimination of this kind was not to be permitted. Mr. Peurifoy suggested that I leave the memorandum with him, which I was glad to do since I had copies of it, and that he would get in touch with me.

In about a few days I went back to Africa and resumed my mission work and, sure enough, within six months time, transfers came through and the number one Foreign Service officer was sent to Paris, France: Rupert Lloyd. And this is the first time that a black Foreign Service officer had ever served in Europe. A second Foreign Service officer, Hanson, was sent to Zurich, Switzerland, and a young lady of great talent was sent to Rome, Italy. They even cleared my code clerk — a fellow by the name of Mebane — out and he was sent to London, England, and they moved the people out so fast that the Liberians complained and said, “What's happening?”

I think we could stop here and having introduced this topic and introduced the fact that there was a satisfactory conclusion, and in my judgment this was probably one of the more important things that I did the whole time I was there, not so much between the relations of Liberia and the United States, but for black Americans. We think we opened the door and stopped this kind of discrimination.

Q: Judge Dudley, that certainly was one of your most important accomplishments I feel too. In what area or areas were you the most disappointed?

DUDLEY: This is not an easy question to answer. I suppose because in most of the areas that we dealt with I don't think we can say that there was real disappointment. However,

one of the things that one takes unto oneself in such a capacity is trying to correct what you might think is a wrong. And during my tour in Liberia, from time to time, word would come through that this person or that person was incarcerated and was held as a political prisoner because he was pushing too hard, he wanted to get in the government or overthrow the government. In many of these areas, we came to believe that a lot of the charges were trumped up, that a lot of the people were certainly not dangerous, that most of these people were simply seeking some form of democracy. And, on one occasion when a presidential election was coming up, the other candidate was put in jail.

I was making a great deal of progress in talking to President Tubman about his methods, and he and I were on pretty good terms by now, by the second, third year of my tour there. But in the mist of what I felt were talks that were fairly successful in changing some things, he got a telegram from my friend Walter White demanding that he immediately release this individual, the same kind of telegram that our black organizations during those years were sending to governors and to mayors here in America where we had political clout and the vote and what not and could change things. But this kind of telegram sent there made no sense at all because these people were not beholden to Walter White or any black organization in America that disapproved of their methods, and they quickly let me know.

I think this set us back quite a bit. In fact, I cabled Thurgood Marshall and told him to have a talk with Walter and to slow down on this kind of thing, and if they had something really to say, and I'm sure that they did, that they could best say it through the State Department, in which case the message would get down to me and I could sit down over a glass of port and talk to the President and probably get more done than some telegram screaming, “We demand that you do this,” that it would ever get over there.

And this represented the disappointment because I felt that in this particular situation I had almost paved the way for getting this man out of jail. This is specifically what it amounted to. And when the telegram came, that was the end of it. They didn't even want to talk to me about it anymore, and, in fact, they began to rave and rant about who do they think

they are and this that and the other, and so forth and so on. But that too passed because we were able to set the record straight and point out the great good that the NAACP had done, and Walter White in particular.

But I simply mentioned that as one of the disappointments that I had during my career there, and that was not necessarily anybody's fault. I think that was our tactic here in America. That's what we did and that's the only way we knew. To say that there were disappointments, I would have to say “no.” There were very few disappointments. In fact, because Truman was our president, because the Point Four Program was being experienced at that time as an experimental kind of thing, I think we probably got more than our share of tools with which to work, of people understanding what we were trying to do, and sufficient pats on the back to keep us pushing forward. So rather than really finding many disappointments, I think there were more high spots, and I would like to leave it at that.

Q: Thank you. If you were going to Liberia today as ambassador, what would you do differently than you did the other time?

DUDLEY: Well, it's difficult for me to even answer that question because, as you and I both know, the Liberia of yesterday doesn't exist today. There's been a coup. There's a different group of people in power there. They have not proven themselves. There's no indication at this stage in their development that they are either educationally or professionally adept at the art of government to even succeed, and I have no knowledge as to how I could even fit into such a pattern, and I'm sure we would have a completely different scenario, so to speak. My arrangement with the former government was a very fine one. Every Thursday I would go over at five o'clock and have an audience with the President after he had finished his work in the day and we would sit down in his salon and we'd go over the matters that may have come by cable that morning, and I would get an answer right away from the head of the country to 95 percent of my problems. If need be, they'd call in the Secretary of State or the Secretary of the Army or what not, if it was that kind of problem. We were able

to conduct our diplomacy extremely well. In between the weekly Thursdays, if something of an emergency nature came up, I could send a message over and indicate that I'd like to see the President almost right away and, invariably, I would have an audience with him.

We got to the point where as I indicated before, they called themselves America's next best friend. And America's representative there, on several occasions, was taken on trips throughout the country with the President to see the various portions of the country, to meet with the tribes, and to observe how he managed to rule his country. This was very enlightening to me. It gave me sort of an inside track that I think wouldn't exist today, wouldn't exist today at all, and we would probably have to start over from scratch and deal with an organization there and with people there who, while I am sure would want the goodwill and the blessing of the American Government and such programs as we would care to give them, would not at all be in a position of tradition or history or early knowledge of their country as the other people were with whom we had been dealing with over the past hundred years. And therefore, I don't think it would be the same thing at all. So, if I had an opportunity to go there and my wish had anything to do with it, I would probably suggest that maybe I should then go to another country rather than to the same country.

Q: Thank you, Judge Dudley.

DUDLEY: Thank you.

Q: It's now noon, shall we conclude this first interview?

DUDLEY: I think so, and we've covered some ground this morning.(END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1)

Q: This is an oral history interview with Judge Edward Richard Dudley, Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York and former Ambassador to Liberia. This interview is being sponsored by the Phelps-Stokes Fund as part of an oral history project on Black Chiefs of Mission. The interview is the second in a series. It is being held Friday, April 17,

1981 at 60 Center Street, New York City. Celestine Tutt, interviewer. Session 2, Tape 2, Side 1.

Judge Dudley, during our last interview we talked about your years in the Foreign Service as Ambassador to Liberia, 1948 to 1953. I think you said there were some additional things you would like to add.

DUDLEY: Yes. One of the things that we found when we were assigned to Liberia was the fact that the diplomatic life, diplomatic corps itself, was probably rated near the top in the life of the community. In other words, here in America there are hundreds of things that pass through our existence of cultural, educational, any number that are different from what we know as government. But in many of the smaller countries, we find that government is the number one topic on a daily basis and the foreign diplomatic community participates in that and almost on a daily basis. This is what you find.

For example, at the time that we were assigned to Liberia, there were only two countries that were really independent on the entire continent of Africa outside of the Union and these were Ethiopia and Liberia. The Gold Coast, which is now Ghana, was headed by the British and one of the aspiring young Africans at that time, a man who had attended Lincoln University here in America, was Nkrumah. I recall the Africans that we were working with were very familiar with the history that was being made in the countries around them. And President Tubman, William V.S. Tubman, as he was known, wanted to invite some of the Africans from the Gold Coast to come to Liberia. But one of the problems there was that Nkrumah was in jail at the time that these discussions were going on. But shortly thereafter, he and members of his party were released from jail by the British and President Tubman sent his yacht down to the Gold Coast to pick up some of the leading members of the aspiring African Party located at that time in the Gold Coast. This was during the time before they became independent and before the Gold Coast became Ghana. I recall that they came to Liberia and my wife at the Embassy put on a rather gala show with the people on the compound for these foreign guests, and the

Liberians were very appreciative. We met any number of people who later on became leaders in the Ghana Government. We met the man who was to become the whip in the Legislature and the second in command. I think one's name was Boucier and we began to know Africans from other areas almost within the first year of our assignment in Liberia.

Now the President in Liberia was probably the most influential man in West Africa at that time, number one, because he was the head of an independent country and, number two, his so-called patron saint was the United States Government of America. And the Legislature in Liberia had decided that he was to have a yacht. The President had never had a yacht before, despite the fact that this country bordered on the Atlantic Ocean. The only boats there were kept by the fishermen and these were the native Africans who would go out on these large canoes and from time to time they would bring back fish. But there were very few pleasure crafts around in the forties when we were there.

So this yacht that the Legislature gave to the President was quite a thing. In fact, they picked it up from one of the Scandinavian countries second-hand, but boats second-hand are just as good as boats new, as I found out. This boat would sleep forty people, to give you an idea how large it was. And the President oftentimes would invite the members of the diplomatic corps to take a cruise with him down the coast of Africa some fifty, seventy-five or a hundred miles and we would sit on the fan deck, enjoy the breeze and the sights that would go by. This was one of the highlights of our sojourn here.

At the same time we were able to, you might say, get a good deal of business accomplished in these kind of meetings with the President; this is the same thing that happens here in America with the big corporations whose members are joint members of a country club. There's an awful lot of buying and selling that's done around the golf course and, similarly, if you're in the company of a man or a woman who has decision-making power, you obviously are able to drop a word here and a word there and get an off-the-cuff answer to something that may have been troubling you for a long time. So we got an

awful lot of business done with these kinds of trips and this added to what we've previously alluded to, the once-a-week meetings that we used to have with the President.

We found that this happened not only with respect to the yacht, but once or twice a year the President would make a trip upstate in order to mend his fences with the scores of tribes and communities that were part of his country, and also to probably assist in pushing them for more food development, because almost everything was imported into the country. I recall that on one of these trips there was a tremendous dispute among two leaders of neighboring tribes. And the dispute was over a piece of land that was between them. And one of the tribe's elders pointed out that this land had been in the confines of his family and the tribe for a hundred years, and the other pointed out that in recent times they had occupied this land. One of the elders chimed in and said, “My grandfather occupied that land.” They said, “Yes, but he was trespassing. He was shot and buried over there.”

Well, this was the way the discussion went between the native people. And the President settled this dispute, I thought, in a very novel way. He found out how many square feet or acres there were in the particular piece of land and he simply gave a comparable amount of land to one of the tribes there. So everybody was happy. The people who said that it was their land, they were able to keep it and the other side was able to get an equally large portion of the land adjoining this for themselves, because one of the things that they had most over there was land and there was a lot of underdeveloped land around.

Also, in countries such as this, we found that there were many, many private operations. Private in the sense number one, religious groups— one in particular — the Episcopalian's had a large mission there. In fact, they had a college in Liberia which was up-country and the college was called Cuttington College, and they brought all of the boys and girls from the surrounding area into the school. This was the number one institution in the country despite the fact that Liberia had its own Liberian University. At that time, Cuttington College was the number one school there. It was headed by Bishop Harris; Bishop

Bravard Harris. He and his wife were there with a small staff and they not only were conducting their religious services, but they were operating a rather major educational institution.

There was another similar mission headed by Bishop King, and Bishop King was of the Methodist faith. But he was on the way out when I got there and there were no lasting compounds from that particular religious institution.

Now the Catholic faith was very strong in Liberia. It was headed up by what we call the papal internuncio, and the papal internuncio was a Bishop Collins, who was sent there by the Vatican, and it was rather interesting to see him on the roads from time to time. He always walked no matter where he went in Liberia; he walked. You would see his long flowing purple robes and the little hat he used to wear on his head. But Bishop Collins would turn up at all of the diplomatic functions representing the Vatican and was the leading exponent of his faith in the country at that particular time. There were other private areas there, some extremely successful and some not successful. For example, we found the remnants of a Marcus Garvey colony in Liberia. And we found that they had not been there very long. I said “remnants” because we found that these people had come over from around Cincinnati in the state of Ohio long after Marcus Garvey's group, which originally went to Africa, had petered out. These people, probably no more than forty or fifty in number, “had been given a piece of land, again upstate in Liberia, probably 150 miles from the capital city, Monrovia. And over a period of five to ten years they had eked out a rather meager existence, so much so that there was great discontent among most of the women and children, and they wanted to go home. And the American Embassy, it was the Legation at that time, was instrumental in getting them returned to the United States. Eventually they all disbanded and came back to the U.S. Most of them had no money and we were asked to provide a government loan to provide transportation for these families to be repatriated, and that we did.

Now Firestone probably was the largest and most successful of the private enterprise groups. Firestone had about 30 square miles of rubber plantations and employed about 200 people there. Maybe 150 were Americans. In addition to providing the latex for their own company, they were instrumental in assisting a large number of Liberians to plant trees to bloom and bear the latex. So that you began to develop a middle class in Liberia of Africans through the efforts of the Firestone Corporation, and this is one of the things that we sawgrow and flourish over the years.

In addition to that, there was a remnant of probably the Stettinius Corporation of which we knew. Stettinius had been a secretary of state at one time and he was also the brother-in-law of Juan Trippe, president of Pan American Air Lines. They put together a small company in the northeastern part of Liberia for the purpose of growing cocoa. Cocoa they knew was one of the leading crops in the Gold Coast at that time. They felt probably the climate in Liberia was conducive to also having this particular crop grown there. And they raised several million dollars and sent out a team of agriculturalists and they got the concession of land from the Liberian Government. But during the entire time that I was there, the product did not grow to the point where it became either profitable or possible for them to stay and keep it going, and I'm not sure to this day whether it really amounted to as much as they wanted to put into it and dreamed of taking out from it.

So this sort of sums up some of the non-government activities that take place in a country of this size. And in all of these, here again your diplomats have a hand in, we have a hand in not only reviewing and presiding over some of these agreements, because in many instances the Liberian Government either backed or approved because of our so-called paternalistic approach to this government which while they didn't recognize it, they always called on us for this kind of help.

Q: Did you ever recommend that the Liberian Government not permit an outside corporation to come in? Were there ever any instances?

DUDLEY: I think so. I think so, because during that period of time, you see, there were other nations trying to come in: Germans, the British, and particularly the French. And I think during the time that we were there the Americans were probably given the nod on many of these things. For example, I think we talked originally about the iron ore in the country and the fact that the Dutch people had it but they didn't move fast enough, and I think the Liberians took the iron ore away from them and turned it over to the Americans. Bethlehem Steel was one of the companies, as well as the Republic Steel, working through an entrepreneur by the name of Lansdell Christie. And Mr. Christie obtained the concession during the time when he was in the army and passing through Africa and found out about this. He had been a businessman in New York City and he had extensive talks with the President of Liberia and made certain offers, I think, that they felt were favorable to their country, and they simply took the concession away from the Dutch, who had paid nothing for it in the first place, and turned it over to Lansdell Christie.

Now in the very beginning I found out again that in the kind of agreement that had been worked out between the Stettinius group and the Liberian Government, was not too favorable to the Liberians. And on my first sojourn back to the United States from Liberia, in the summertime, I was in Newport, Rhode Island on vacation when I got a telephone call from some of the people who were heading up this company to come down to New York and meet them at the Plaza Hotel . I came down. The problem was that the Liberian Government was putting pressure on them to renegotiate the contract because they felt that the part they were to receive was insufficient. And this was the first time that I knew anything about the contract because it had been concluded before I got there. And I found out at this meeting that the Liberians were to get five cents a ton for iron ore delivered to the docks that would sell for fourteen dollars a ton. And I felt that this was a rather unconscionable arrangement and they were seeking my help to get the Liberians to sign this contract, this renewal. I told them I thought it would be in their best interest to renegotiate this contract and that I would not represent them with respect to this matter at all (represent them on behalf of the American Government) because I thought that they

were wrong. They pointed out that when they first went in there that this was what they called venture capital and nobody knew whether it was going to succeed or fail, and they had to put millions of dollars in. I indicated, well, of course, this is why this is called venture capital because if you succeed the rewards are tremendous, and if you fail, obviously you fail. This is the history of capitalism all over the world.

Well, to make a long story short, they went back to Liberia and renegotiated this contract and it came out with the Liberians getting 49 percent and them getting 51 percent, which meant the difference of probably about 30 million dollars to the Liberians.

Well, these are the kind of things that the diplomatic community can be helpful to both your government and to the other government. To your government in the sense that, if we had not done this, there would have been a very unhappy situation. They would have taken the contract over, maybe put these people out, and they were a little short-sighted in not seeing this. But these were some of the things that we were able to participate in.

Q: You spoke a few minutes ago about Firestone's great effort there and of how they were in part responsible for the creation of this middle class in Liberia. What about Bethlehem Steel? I sort of view that as corporate social responsibility. It would fall into that area. Did Bethlehem Steel do anything like that?

DUDLEY: Yes, actually Bethlehem Steel moved out of the picture after the first few months and Republic Steel picked up with the entrepreneur. Actually, it was the entrepreneur who did the managing of this and this individual had a contract with Republic Steel. First of all, it was Bethlehem Steel, but they were not represented as a steel company as Firestone was represented. Firestone operated, owned and did the entire thing, whereas here this man Christie, he was the owner of it and he brought these companies in with respect to financing and it was a little different situation.

Now, I tell you what he did do. He made it possible again for a large number of Liberian people to become stockholders in the company. The Liberian Secretary of State and

hundreds of officials began almost immediately to draw dividends on the stock that they purchased at a nominal amount of money. To my knowledge, this is going on today. The company was very successful because, as I indicated earlier, they found some of the highest grade iron ore in the world right there in this country.

And our participation was to assist them in getting an export-import bank loan so that they could build a railroad from the docks about 40 kilometers up to the mine site. But they did open up employment all the way up the scale, not only in the laboring groups, but in the office and in the supervisory category. They brought a minimum of people there from America to operate, whereas in the initial stages of Firestone, they brought all of the people from America with exception of the labor. So I think here they moved faster than Firestone in terms of upgrading and training and teaching the Liberian people how to become self-sufficient in many endeavors. Some were sent to engineering schools, others had administrative techniques handed down or passed over to them. So what I'm trying to say probably is that there were any number of white-collar jobs created as a result of this going concern, which became extremely successful.

Q: Are there any other areas that you'd like to cover at this time?

DUDLEY: Only a footnote with respect to our own government's understanding of it's role there. And this has to do with politics. I found that as long as the Democrats were in power, their interest primarily was in assisting these countries to get on their own feet. They would assist them in the kind of social programs that we know here in this country. This was one of the things that we did, as we have previously discussed in the Point Four Program.

But I was there at the time when the Democratic government was defeated in America and the Republicans came in. And one of the disappointments that I got was that almost immediately the Republicans wanted to abandon that approach that we had successfully tried over a period of years, successfully, because I was able to see after the harbors and

ports had been developed, hundreds of ships coming in bringing exports from America and taking from Liberia imports to us: imports in the form of the rubber latex; in the form of iron ore; in the form of certain agricultural products that were sent throughout the world; palm kernels, for example, from which you get palm oil; and ingredients that are used in many of the industrial areas.

The Republicans primarily were interested in the strategic areas of the world, strategically militarily to us. And therefore, they began to cut back almost immediately on the aid kind of program. And they were talking in terms of beefing up the airport, getting military bases and getting naval bases there and cutting the budget from the Point Four Program. This wasn't their program; they didn't dream it up. And I found this to be very disappointing. As a corollary to this; we're now talking in terms of the time factor when the Reagan Administration has just come in, and we find the same thing going on now, not only throughout the world, but here in America. We find the cutbacks growing in these kind of programs, whereas there is a concomitant move to strengthen the military and put more on defense, and so forth and so on. I felt that there was a balance that we must maintain in these areas.

And while I understand that you can't keep certain programs going on forever, I do feel that it's just as vital to us in dealing with other countries to carry out what Harry Truman had originally told me, and that is that if you can add one inch to the Chinaman's shirttail, you could keep all the mills of New England running for a hundred years. This is not only figuratively but literally true, as we found there in the bringing out the rubber and iron ore and the training of these people. And once they became middle class and the lower class began to move up, they were buying things. They were buying automobiles and they were buying beds, and they were buying all kind of goods in the millions of dollars. Our export-import balance was always very favorable. We were helping them but we were getting for our American business people, I would say, ten times over in the things we were able to sell them, because almost everything over there they had to import. They didn't have factories. It's not an industrial nation; it's an agricultural kind of economy. So it's

shortsighted if we're not going to take a look at that phase of it. If we are going to cut back on these kind of programs, its shortsighted.

That was one of the disappointing features. And that's one of the reasons why while I was asked to stay on for awhile, I did stay on for seven months under this new Administration, but then I came back so that primarily my son could go to better schools here in America.

Q: How did Liberia adjust to that change in U.S. foreign policy toward Liberia?

DUDLEY: Well, they adjusted as any country would have to adjust. By that time they were probably far more self-sufficient and had many, many more trained people after this five-year period than they would have had without it. They adjusted . But on the other hand, tragically, I think, we cut the program off about 20 years too soon. And history has pointed out that in the last years we've had a coup in that country from the so-called military. But the military was run by the uneducated, the so-called tribal groups there, and it was not only because the Americo-Liberians were so-called a class apart that triggered this. The thing that triggered this was, a year before there had been a rice famine there and the people were not able to get enough to eat and the price of rice skyrocketed, and the government wasn't able to control this. In the riots that followed that, many people got killed, and I think that this basically was what you might call the proximate cause of what eventually happened. The entire government was eradicated. And a very sad thing it was, too, in the manner and the way in which it happened.

So while you can't say very decidedly, you can look back and say it's very probable that some of the things that caused these latest turns in the history of this country were the fact that their friend, the United States, pulled out a little too soon, before they were ready. You can say that. Now people don't like to use that expression. They say, “Well, we're always ready and we can stand on our feet.” But they're two different things. There's a readiness with respect to the freedoms that go along with independence and there's an unreadiness

with respect to the economic climate in the country which will support these freedoms. And that's what I'm talking about.

Q: So your Point Four Program suffered terribly at that point? Was it adopted elsewhere in Africa?

DUDLEY: Well, you must remember that the idea was captured originally following World War II from the Marshall Plan in Europe, where we went in and spent millions of dollars rehabilitating the European countries. And this was an attempt, for the first time, to move in this kind of direction into one of the so-called third-world countries, and it was not to my knowledge adopted as a plan.

We participated in assisting on specific projects in other areas of Africa, all throughout Ghana, Nigeria, even today in Zimbabwe. I think we are going to help that government there with respect to specifics but not the kind of program that we had beginning at that time and which we had partnership all the way down to the individual in the country, one American, one of the countrymen in each area of endeavor — agriculture, education, public health, engineering and what not where you would just send a whole group over there.

Now probably the nearest that we've had to that kind of thing has been that some of the Arabian countries — Saudi Arabia particularly — they have adopted entire universities in America where they have been able to send, per agreement, hundreds of their people over to get skills and what not, and the university has gone over there and transferred some of its know-how right on the site, and this kind of thing. So that's been a private kind of thing with some of our schools, but I think it has had certainly the sponsorship and understanding of our government. But the germ of the idea began back in 1948.

Q: Thank you.

DUDLEY: A minute ago, I think before we started this, you began to talk about, in addition to Africa, some other phases of my career. But before we get away from Africa, I think it's well to point out that we had three main directors in this Point Four Program that you were talking, we were discussing. The first one was a fellow by the name of Oscar Myer, and the second one was Reed Hill. Reed Hill is a man you will recall that I indicated was denominated persona non grata. It was following Reed Hill that John W. Davis came to head up this kind of program there, and throughout all of these directors, who had about 100 people under them, we found it very successful. These were accomplished, distinguished Americans who came over and really made a contribution and I thought it worthwhile naming them, for whatever it may be to some historian in the future.

Now it's interesting here in New York how some of us got the opportunity to serve our country. I originally — my family came from North Carolina. The Dudleys came from New Bern, North Carolina, and down in the southeast corner of that state on the Neuse River, and the Johnsons, my mother's people, came from Raleigh, North Carolina. Both of them had large families. That time, in those days, large families were probably the thing. By large families I mean ten, twelve, thirteen children each.

My mother became a school teacher and she taught in Charlotte, North Carolina, and my father went to Howard University and became a dentist. And this is going way back because here it is 1981 and I can recall an uncle that I. had who's just one generation removed from me who was born before the Civil War, if that seems possible. I can explain that.

This was my mother's older brother. His name was Edward A. Johnson; he was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, 1860. My mother was one of the younger of these thirteen children and there was probably about twenty-five years difference between his age and her age, and she was probably born around 1885. I knew this man when I had finished school and came to New York for the first time around 1931. He was running a real estate

business here and had been at that time the first assemblyman in the state of New York. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

My father, who had gone to Howard University Dental School, met my mother and they were married around 1909. My mother's name was Nelly Johnson and my father's name is the same as mine, Edward Richard Dudley. Also, his father was a farmer back in North Carolina during the 1860's.

One of my mother's sisters was living in South Boston, Virginia and my father had moved to Roanoke, Virginia after he left Howard University. My mother was on the way from North Carolina where she'd been visiting and I was born in South Boston when she stopped to visit her sister. She was on her way to Roanoke and she didn't make it, and that's how I happened to be born in South Boston, Virginia; however, I grew up in Roanoke.

I went to the grammar school as we called it then, in Roanoke Virginia, and in my third year of high school I was sent to boarding school to what had been Biddle University. It was then Johnson C. Smith University. They had a high school at that time, and during those days most of the Southern schools had a high school department. In fact, many of them started out as high schools.

Johnson Smith, which was old Biddle, had been founded by Major Biddle back in 1867 and my father had gone to Johnson C. Smith. I think this is probably one of the reasons why I went. And I went to this school, finished in five years, having gone to the last year of high and four years of college. And it was at that point that I came to New York City.

I stayed a very few months and went back and I wasn't at all keen on what I was going to do. I didn't have my thoughts together, and one of the members in the community was able to get me a scholarship to Howard University Dental School. This was furthest from my mind, but I went. So, in 1934 I went to dental school. I didn't like it. I passed all of my subjects; I was very good in anatomy and after one year I left and went to New York City.

But the year before that I taught school, my first year out of college, in Augusta County, Virginia, and I taught in the typical one-room school house. I had seven grades and I drove the school bus. I lived twenty miles from the school in a place called Moffits Creek. I picked the kids up along the way to the school, which was located in Greenville, Virginia, in Augusta County. And those students who lived closest to the school would get there early and they would make a fire in the big pot-belly stove and that's how we got heat in the winter time.

As I indicated, I drove a bus and they paid me seventy dollars a month to teach school and ten dollars a month to drive the school bus. My salary was eighty dollars a month. And that was plenty because I was spending only fifteen a month for room and board with a family by the name of Charlie Ross — an old farmer and his wife who took me in — and we had excellent food. He raised his own food; he killed his own hogs; he even made his own apple cider. This was one of the most delightful years of my life, because I found that in that kind of community the school teacher becomes a leader overnight regardless of what experience he or she may have. The people asking questions; he's expected to go to the church; and he has to speak and talk on all subjects — all of the problems are brought to the school teacher.

I probably would have remained there except that at the end of the year, I got the scholarship to go to dental school. I gave up the teaching and went to Howard University. Following that I went to New York and went to live with my uncle, Edward A. Johnson, who was in New York at that time.(END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2)

Q: Today is April 17, 1981.

DUDLEY: Now at this time I was twenty-three years old and I still hadn't decided what I wanted to do. Probably one of the reasons, this was the middle of the depression. This was the big depression that we had here in America and there were very few jobs and probably less money, and my mother had passed away when I was seven years

old. She had pneumonia and my father had married again and there were three other children. I moved off, it seems, in order that I would not complicate their lives, and I came to New York bright, fresh and full of vinegar, stopped with my uncle to find out if there was anything I could do for him and, probably more importantly, if there was anything he could do for me. And at that point, in the first few months and years, there wasn't anything that probably we could do for either.

However, I enjoyed knowing him. He was an extremely literate man; had written several books. At the time that I knew him he was going blind fast and I spent many hours reading to him, not only the daily papers, but everything that you could get your hands on. He grew up in an era of DuBois, John Hope, who was president of Atlanta University, and Mary McLeod Bethune, and many of these very distinguished Americans he knew firsthand. He would read the Crisis Magazine and the Phylon, which was a magazine put out by Atlanta University, and I would read them to him. So during that period of my life I got an opportunity to really know what was going on in the black world through my uncle, and I give him a great deal of credit for this.

However, he was retired, so to speak, and a man at that point in his 70's. And while I also assisted him in his real estate office — this was a small office with probably fifteen or twenty houses that he managed — I didn't consider this really full-time or anything that would lead to a career. And it didn't. So I applied for a job with WPA as everybody else did at that time in the middle of the depression. They wanted to know what my skills were, and while they were very few, they found out that during my college career I had participated in what was known as “the little theater,” and I had been a stage manager and developed plays from the very inception of them. They gave me a job as an assistant stage manager at the Lafayette Theater for the Federal Theater. And this now was 1935, from assistant stage manager in going over any number of productions.

After they found that I was doing some of this work in college, as I indicated, they gave me this job as assistant stage manager and we began to put on plays at the Lafayette

Theater. Now in those days, you may recall, we had a real segregated society and Lafayette Theater is located in Harlem. Hallie Flanagan, who was running the whole thing, had theaters downtown and there were comparable little theater groups all around. We had a large one; we had well over 200-300 people and some of the most distinguished actors in America who had fallen upon hard times. They were not able to get work.

Dooley Wilson was one of the actors that we had. He played with Humphrey Bogart in “As Time Marches On;” Butterfly McQueen, later who was in “Gone With the Wind.” Any number of black actors and actresses had joined our group. And it became a workshop for young playwrights. Carlton Moss, who later went to Hollywood and did very well, he wrote some of the plays that we put on.

In the beginning there were rather modest productions. Then Orson Welles came in to work with us and not only wrote the adaptation but directed a Haitian “Macbeth,” a Haitian “Macbeth” in the sense that some of the scenes with the witches, for example, were put around the voodoo kind of thing, and it was a tremendous success.

This “Macbeth,” and I became one of the stage managers there, was not only moved downtown and played in the major theaters downtown, but we took it on the road. We took “Macbeth” to the Dallas centennial when they had the centennial down in Texas in 1936; we took it to Detroit; we took it to Chicago and all around.

So in almost a short time I became a major impresario in dealing with theater, and I enjoyed it very much. But my total preoccupation was behind the scenes. I was not an actor; I had no interest in that and the foot lights at all. I was pulling the curtain, directing the sound tracks. For example, if we wanted a scene with horses coming on stage, we would use two hollow cocoanut shells, and with the proper kind of beat we could simulate horses' hoofs coming in the distance as an actor spoke the lines and so forth. If we wanted rain or wind, storms coming up, we had all kinds of things we put together. We put together a wide drum in which we'd have some pebbles and we'd gradually turn it around

and it would sound like rain beating on a tin roof. And this kind of thing was very effective. We did a lot of things from real improvisation and learned a lot in the process.

Later on, I was transferred to a show downtown which became really interracial for the first time and it was called “Pinocchio.” It was produced and directed by a Hollywood director by the name of Yasha Frank. We had come in for this particular show and we played this in the Shubert Theater. That, too, was a hit. Now it was about 1939 and I decided that this was a dead-end street, dead-end particularly because stage hands, for example, were not permitted to work below 125th Street in New York City. In other words, they could work at the Apollo Theater, and there was a burlesque house on Third Avenue and 125th Street and they could work there. Obviously, we trained a lot of them at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem, but they couldn't get jobs, and I saw no real future in moving into the big time in the New York theaters.

So I decided to go to law school, and I did. I was working in the theater at night and I was going to law school in the daytime at St. John's University. And realizing that I'd spent or wasted a great deal of time, I went to law school summer and winter and I finished law school in two years and passed the bar in 1941. I was admitted to practice in New York the day after Pearl Harbor, December 8, 1941,and I started, as I say, in 1939 — this is a three-year course. But having gone two summer sessions, I was able to make up and do the whole thing in two calendar years.

I was member of the Law Review staff at St. John's University, which means that you're on the staff that puts out the periodicals that they do put out, after which I got my Law Review key and wrote a number of contributing articles, some of which later were helpful to me. Years later, when I became a Family Court judge, I ran across an article that I had written on domestic relations and I got quite a kick out of it.

After I went to law school for about a year, I stopped my job and then shortly after I got out of school and passed the bar, it became 1942. I took a job in the advertising department

of Pepsi Cola Company and it was at that point that Thurgood Marshall, who was running a one-man legal office for the NAACP, was looking around for someone to help him. And I came in at the request of a friend of mine to see Thurgood and he hired me on the spot as an assistant special counsel to the NAACP Legal Department. The Legal Department at that time consisted of Thurgood and myself.

A great deal of good work then had been done even before Thurgood got there by Charlie Houston, working out of Washington, DC, and Bill Hastie. And so we conducted our work with a large number of private lawyers situated throughout the United States. These were all black lawyers. There were Loren Miller in Los Angeles, Bob Ming in Chicago, W.J. Durham in Dallas, Texas and A.T. Walden in Atlanta, Georgia, and a few others; Alexander Looby from Tennessee, who later became a judge there; and Harold Flowers from Little Rock, Arkansas. I can name these because at that time A.T. Walden was the only black lawyer in the state of Georgia. There were no black lawyers in the state of South Carolina, none. In Virginia you had Oliver Hill, who later went on to prominence as the first black elected official in the South since Reconstruction days. And Spottswood Robinson, who is now a federal judge in Washington, DC, and Martin A. Martine from Danville, Virginia. The three of these that I just named formed a law firm in Richmond, Virginia. which became the first black firm in the South. So what we would do when we got a case throughout the United States, we would call on these lawyers who were strategically placed, asked their help and they would give it. And this was the way we were able to handle far more than the number of cases that our office could handle itself.

Shortly after this, we brought into the office Robert Carter, Connie Motley and Franklin Williams, each of whom has made a tremendous contribution to the American scene. Carter and Motley have become federal judges; Franklin Williams became a United States ambassador and is now president of the Phelps-Stokes Fund.

Walter White, during this period of time, was the head of the NAACP and a very influential man he was in America. During the war period, the later days of the war period, he was

able to get permission for us to go into the state of Washington, where the military had a secret operation going which we later found out was the making of the atom bomb. And we were asked to go in there because there was rank segregation among the working people. They had segregated buses, segregated dining rooms, and I was selected to go out after Walter White got us permission to get there and talk to the managers. And this project was run by both the military and the DuPont people. And after a series of conversations with both groups, we were able to stop the segregation out there on a voluntary basis. Most of our other problems at that time we took to court and we were very successful in many of the suits that we brought.

For example, the teacher's salary suits in the South, here we found people who had equal qualifications for doing equal work who were getting paid on a different pay scale, solely on the basis of race, and it was this kind of discrimination that led to petitions that we would draw up and file with the Boards of Education.

At that time, interestingly enough, we had to take a number of steps that we don't have to take now. There is something in the law which is called “exhausting your administrative remedies.” In other words, you must file your petition first of all with the first person that has something to do with the problem that you allege. In the cases of these educational matters, this would be the local school board. We'd file a decision against the local school board asking for relief and we'd get turned down. And then we'd go to the state school board; we'd get turned down . Then we'd file a suit in the county of the city where we were, and we'd be defeated there. They would rule against us. Then we'd have to take it to the state Appellate Court, and then they'd defeat us there, and then we'd have to go on to the Federal Court.

It was in the Federal Court where we won these cases. And after the first few of them, we even got a decision indicating that we did not have to exhaust our administrative remedies; that that was a waste of time. Where it was a foregone conclusion what was going to happen, then you could avoid some of these intermediate steps and we would file the

petition with the school board. Once we got turned down, we'd go from there immediately into the Federal Court. We'd bypass the city courts and they would accept us. And this was very heartening.

We got into many other things. We got into voting rights. Here again we had the same problem with respect to the Democratic primaries. The black people were excluded from the democratic process. And the Democratic primaries in the South, that was the whole ball game because there was no Republican Party down there. If you couldn't be part of the Democratic primary vote, then you weren't part of the vote. We got a case that eventually said that it's an integral part of the voting process of this country and it should be open to persons irrespective of their race.

In the 15th Amendment, everybody is entitled to vote and, as you recall, back in the 1860's,the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments passed in rapid succession there. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery, the 14th Amendment guaranteed equal protection of the law to everyone, and the 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote. This is a simplistic explanation of these Amendments, but those of us who were participating in the constitutional law at that time, we understood them pretty well. We thought we did. And we were backed up by the courts. And it wasn't long after that that things began to open up.

I was still very young at that time. Walter White got a call from someone asking if they knew a young lawyer who wanted to go to the Virgin Islands, and I don't think we're going to dwell on this because I spoke about it in one of our other conversations here. But anyway, I went down to talk to the Governor of the Virgin Islands and he asked me to go down and handle a problem that he had down there pertaining to the opening of a bar and grill right off the naval base. I agreed that I would go down. But I never saw him again. I've told this story and I see no particular point in repeating it.

Q: Yes, but you didn't tell it on tape.

DUDLEY: Well, what happened was that the naval commander had asked the Governor of the Virgin Islands, one Charlie Harwood, if he would close the bar and grill because some of his sailors were going over there and getting in trouble. And the bar and grill was owned by a native man in St. Thomas, off the territory of the naval base but in juxtaposition to it. And Charlie Harwood asked his Attorney General there, who was chief law officer in the Virgin Islands, to close up this area. And the Attorney General wrote an opinion in which he said that you could not close it unless there were formal charges and had to go through due process. In other words, you just couldn't summarily close it up because someone around wanted to close it up. It had to be for cause.

Well the Governor didn't like that and he went to Congress, where he was very influential, and he got. Congress to amend his budget in order that he could appoint his own legal counsel. He'd never had a legal counsel before and while this didn't disturb the Attorney general's role there, it did give the Governor a legal arm. And it is this position that he came to New York and spoke to Bill O'Dwyer, the then mayor, about getting him a lawyer to go down as his legal counsel. Bill O'Dwyer spoke to Walter White and Walter White asked me if I'd go down and see what I could do for them. And I did.

First I went to the Roosevelt Hotel here in New York City and had a conference with the Governor, and it was at that conference that he outlined his problem to me. And I indicated to him that I'd be glad to go and read the law and do the best that I could. And I did.

I went to Washington, where I was employed by the Interior Department, because the Virgin Islands were under the insular arm of our Interior Department, and then I set sail for St. Thomas, set sail literally. I took the ship called “The George Washington;” I took about five days to get there. In the meantime, the Governor was still here in the United States.

The first file that the Lieutenant Governor gave me was a file with respect to the bar and grill at Bournefield. That was the name of the base in St. Thomas. I read the file; I read the Attorney General's opinion and I wrote an opinion of my own in which I said substantially

what the Attorney General had said — that you couldn't close it up except for cause; that you would have to have some reason to close it up; and there had to be a hearing. And the Lieutenant Governor had gone all the way to Washington to get me as his private counsel and then I came down here and gave him this kind of opinion. I said I couldn't help that. He asked me to come down and be his lawyer and I could only give him what I thought the law was.

I never saw the Governor again. He was on the way home through Miami and read in the newspaper there — the Miami Herald — that he'd been fired by Harry Truman. Westbrook Pegler, who wrote a column in the Miami Herald, put it this way. He said that the “Governor of the Virgin Islands serves at the pleasure of the President of the United States. Apparently, the President didn't get any more pleasure out of Charlie Harwood and so he fired him.”

Well, this changed things immensely back in the Islands. The Lieutenant Governor stopped talking to me about the bar and grill because he didn't personally care. He was a local native white man by the name of Morris DeCastro, but he didn't care about the bar and grill. He was interested in running the Islands. So for the next eight months, he and I did just that. We enjoyed the job of running the Virgin Islands without a governor, without a governor for the period of time because, although William H. Hastie was nominated, the United States Senate refused to confirm him for that number of months. And they held up his nomination until, I think, it was the fall of 1946, October or so before he was permitted to come down. I put in my resignation but Hastie asked me to stay on, and I stayed on another year as counsel to the Governor of the Virgin Islands. Then I came back with my wife and son in order to put him in school, and it was almost a year later that history repeated itself.

They were looking for someone to go to Africa and become the United States Minister. Why? Because the then Minister, a man by the name of Raphael O'Hara Lanier had resigned to go back to Florida and enter the educational system from which he came,

because he was sure that the Democrats were going to lose out that year and that Thomas E. Dewey would become the next president of the United States.

Well, I told the persons who asked me if I would go that I'd never been anywhere except the Virgin Islands, and we'd go over that summer and be home by Christmas. And we did go and rather than get back Christmas, as the world now knows, Harry Truman was elected the President of the United States and Thomas E. Dewey was defeated. I say elected because he had been Vice President when Roosevelt died. He had been the President and he was now elected in his own right. He was President, as I indicated, when I was in the Virgin Islands. But now he was elected in his own right and it was he who appointed me as Minister to Liberia, and that sort of brings us full tilt around again.

Q: Yes.

DUDLEY: Picking up where we left off at the end of the Truman Administration, which was the beginning of 1953, when Eisenhower took office, I realized rather quickly that the Republicans were doing several things. Number one, there was a great deal of pressure to get my job and I found out that the black Republicans particularly, and I don't blame them because we were operating in a patronage system, and I had gone there because of my legal background and because of my background in the Interior Department and not because I was a career officer.

So the Republican Administration in Washington was doing two things: I think they were looking around for someone to replace me and at the same time they were beginning to make their own impact felt by change in their foreign policy. And this foreign policy, as I've indicated, not only was it surprising to me, but it was somewhat distasteful because we had gone to great lengths to set up the kinds of programs that we felt were not only good for Liberia, but were extremely good for the United States, not in the sense that we were being taught the skills. In fact, we were on the other end of that. We were doing the teaching of the skills, but we were in the position to assist American businessmen

in coming into the country and becoming involved in iron ore, rubber, diamonds and thousands and thousands of household items that were being shipped there and sold, which was all in the interest of the U.S. Government. And I felt that this was a shortsighted policy, which was to now begin to put the emphasis on the military and reduce the social programs of the rehabilitation programs.

So after several months, I asked to be returned and I left Liberia the First of July and asked for an audience with the President of the United States, President Eisenhower, after I returned to the State Department. And they gave me a date, July 7th, to come in and see the President. I came in to see Eisenhower and I was ushered into the Oval Office and he was sitting behind his desk and got up. I gave the usual greeting from the country from which I had just returned, brought him greetings from President Tubman, and so forth and so on, and I gave him a thumbnail sketch of what we had been doing there.

And then he began to talk about what he was doing here. I was extremely disappointed in my talks with Eisenhower, probably because of my background. Eisenhower said to me, among other things, that he had just been successful in integrating the naval base in Charleston, South Carolina. And I think he mentioned that because I was a black man talking to him. And he went on to say that it was going to be his policy that wherever the Federal Government had jurisdiction, that he was going to act. And it was this, I think, that upset me, because coming from my background with the NAACP, I knew that if that's all he was going to do — act where the Federal Government had jurisdiction — that there was going to be limited approach by his Administration to the vast problems of discrimination and segregation that engulfed this nation.

This was because the federal installations were few and far between. We had them in the federal hospitals, the Veterans Administration and our bases and so forth and so on. But the bulk of the discrimination in this country was in every town, in every hamlet and every state and every city that we would encounter, in every piece of transportation and right on down the line. And if he was going to restrict himself, as he said, to wherever

the Federal Government had jurisdiction, then this was going to be a sad day for us. And this is exactly what happened. And during the next eight years the only real thing that Eisenhower got involved in — and he was forced into that — was the problems that we had out in Arkansas that time. And he had to get involved in that because he couldn't avoid it.

So I made my farewell remarks to him and returned to the State Department. After a few days, I reentered private life and went back to my law profession, which was my profession. And at the same time the NAACP asked me to head up one phase of their operation, which I did, and that was the Life Membership operation — a fund-raising aspect of the NAACP program, and I did. And I raised quite a bit of money for them, probably about a hundred thousand dollars at that period of time. Together with a board member by the name of Kivie Kaplan, who was put in charge of the Life Membership committee, we did more probably to get the Life Membership program on the ground than anybody else that I know of in the infancy of this program.

The Life Membership program was $500 and, well, we began to appeal to all segments of America. We enrolled the doctors, the lawyers, many of the professional people who had not participated in the NAACP up to that time. The NAACP had been a grass-roots operation. It was supported by the $2 membership of the man-on-the-street and the woman in the churches of the South, and it had its branches throughout. And the NAACP got one dollar and the other dollar remained with the branch and this is how it was supported. At that time it's membership was only about 500 or 600 thousand.

And I was very pleased with this activity and I've always been very partial to the work of the NAACP, since I'd spent several years there, and also because I think it was through them that I was able to launch my own career. Certainly I give them credit, working with Thurgood and getting the experience in the Legal Department and trying the cases there and getting Walter White's blessing in moving up in these various jobs that I've talked about.

Within another year the Mayor of this city, Robert F. Wagner, called me down and asked if I wanted to be a member of the Family Court here, and I agreed. And he appointed me a domestic relations judge here in New York in 1955. And I became a judge and served there for several years until I moved on to, and at his behest, to become the Borough President of Manhattan. In fact, I was trying a case out in Queens and I got a telephone call and this was from the Mayor's office, and he indicated that the City Council was meeting, and the Borough President's job was vacant and he was nominating me for the post.

I resigned on the spot at that time, and called in another judge and gave him the cases that I had, unfinished, and I went down to City Hall and was sworn in as the Borough President. And the borough presidency was vacant at that time because Hulan Jack, the previous occupant, had been removed from the office, and having been appointed by the City Council, which is the provision in the charter for the continuation of the office when it becomes vacant between terms. The very next year I was called upon to run for an office myself if I wanted to stay. And I did run. And I became embroiled in a primary fight.

All during these years that we've talked about I'd been very close to the NAACP and had not really participated in the political side of our community's life. Not that I was against it; I was just not called upon to do it. So when it came time for me to run for the office for myself, my political backing was rather meager, and I recall that the black leaders came to call on me and they indicated that they would support me for the position of Borough President. I thanked them for it and then two days later they came around and said that Adam Powell had felt that they should have someone else in this position, someone who could probably raise a war chest to support it. I indicated to them that I had my own campaign manager, treasurer of my campaign, and so forth and so on, and I was satisfied with it.

At that point they dropped me and they put up as their candidate Lloyd Dickens, who was one of the district leaders in Harlem. At the same time, a man who had been a

congressman and whose district was part of Manhattan and part of the Bronx - his name was Freddie Santangelo — decided that he wanted to run for Borough President. This was the primary, not the general election; the Democratic primary race. Then there were three of us in the race. I was in the race, Mr. Dickens was the candidate of the black leaders in the race, and Santangelo, who was running. And after a very vigorous and hotly-contested race, which I won and also, subsequently, the general election, I stayed in the Borough President's office until I was elected to the Supreme Court at the end of 1964.

After about five years in the Borough President's office, with all that entailed, being a member of the Board of Estimates, and dealing with transportation and educational projects, local school boards, local planning boards, and governmental decisions at every level, I came to the conclusion that this was something I didn't want to continue in. One of the reasons I think was because almost everything in the city was controversial no matter what it was. If you were involved in the fluoridation of water, for example, we would have to have public hearings and there would be thousands of people who'd come down and they would be for fluoridation and then another thousand people would come down and be against fluoridation, no matter what it was. And it was continuing controversy. And the art of government is the art of compromise. And it's very difficult when you have special interest groups and they're all pushing for their particular point of view, and it keeps things on a tilt continuously.

So about the end of 1963, I'd come to the conclusion that if the opportunity presented itself I was going to run for the Supreme Court. And it did in 1964; and I got the nomination and I ran for the State Supreme Court, and I won. I was sworn in January 1, 1965. This was for a 14-year term, and for the first few years of the term I was assigned to the trial of both civil and criminal cases. But then there came a time when we were having a number of riots in New York in 1968 and 1967 and I felt that a job that was offered me was offered to me primarily because I was a black man, and that was to be the administrative judge of the Criminal Court of the City of New York.

I think it's common knowledge that most of the street crime has been committed by minority people in our cities for reasons that many of us know. And I think here the powers that be decided that we're in the middle and let's put a black man here as head of the Criminal Court and maybe we can get something done and also take some of the political steam out of this whole question. And I was made administrator of the Criminal Court of the City of New York, while at the same time being a Supreme Court judge. And later the administrator of the Supreme Court retired and I was asked to take over the role. So for the past twelve, thirteen years I've been doing administrative work along with other work in the court system. But I think I started as an administrator primarily, as I indicated, because I think they were looking for a black person to take over that particular job, just as in our society today we have a black man who heads up the prison system in New York City. I think this is calculated because we have a lot of black and Puerto Rican prisoners, and it's a very difficult job. So the day-to-day criticisms that come in they say, let them fall on someone else's shoulders. I could be wrong about this, but that's my gut reaction to it.

I've enjoyed administration. I first began my administration many, many years ago and I think it's been fairly successful. I'm now in my second 14-year term, having been elected year before last to a second term. The first 14 years was up and we shall see what we shall see.

Q: Shall we discuss that in the next session?

DUDLEY: I think so. Raise your questions and I'll be ready for them.

Q: Thank you very much, Judge Dudley.

DUDLEY: Thank you, Miss Tutt.(END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2)

Q: Today is Friday, May 8, 1981, Judge Dudley, could we begin this session by your telling a bit about your present work?

DUDLEY: I think so, Miss Tutt. First of all, let me say that during the early years of my career, when I suppose I was very interested in the NAACP and the civil rights struggle in America, it was furthest from my thought that I would wind up as a sitting judge on the bench in the State of New York. In fact, as you have found out in your earlier questions, it has been rather a circuitous route, all the way from the Virgin Islands to Africa before we got back to the judicial problems of New York State. But it did happen. After my return from Foreign Service, and I had resigned in early 1953, upon the election of a new government in Washington, I continued for a brief time my law practice and received a request from then Mayor Wagner to come and see him and talk about the possibility of a job in the Domestic Relations Court in the City of New York. And it did pan out and I was given the job. It was an appointment of the Mayor and on October the 19, 1955, I was sworn in as a Family Court judge by Mayor Robert F. Wagner. This position I held for approximately five years until some time in 1960, when the position of Borough President of the County of New York became vacant.

Once again, the call went out to someone to preside over another one of our institutions, and I was fortunate enough to get the call from the Mayor while trying cases in the Family Court. I resigned my position there and was sworn in by the City Council as Borough President of Manhattan. In this position I stayed approximately five years and then ran for the office of Supreme Court, which is an office of the State of New York. In the later part of 1964, I won the nomination and the election and was sworn in on January 1, 1965, as a Supreme Court judge of the State of New York.

After a few years of trying cases, both criminal and civil, which is the jurisdiction of this court, Mayor Lindsay, who was then the Mayor of the City of New York, and who had been plagued by the riots of the 60's and the rising rate of crime, apparently decided that he wanted to make a change in his administration of the city-wide Criminal Court of the City of New York. And he and the presiding judge of the appellate division, Judge Botein, came to talk to me about taking on the job. While I was a Supreme Court judge, I was eligible to

preside over another court providing that court was a court of lesser jurisdiction, and so was the Criminal Court of the City of New York.

It was my feeling at that time, and it still is my feeling, that I was selected primarily because I was black. And that may be a strange statement to make, but I think we might take a look at what the situation was at that time. This was the beginning of an era in which we had a great deal of street crime and the street crime was perpetrated primarily by the black and Puerto Rican, that that in a sense would take some of the onus off some of the city fathers who were not black and who had the responsibility, politically, economically, and administratively, for running the city. I felt it then and I feel it now.

I took this position as the administrative judge of the Criminal Court of the City of New York. I reorganized that court. We had 96 judges city-wide. We operated in Queens and Brooklyn, Staten Island, the Bronx and New York county, which is commonly known as Manhattan, and after several years, I was nominated again in the appointed process to become the administrative judge of the Supreme Court of the State of New York for the First Department. And the First Department geographically takes in New York and Bronx counties only. The Supreme Court of the State of New York is fragmented, as you can see, from New York City. The Second Department takes care of business in Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island in so far as New York City is concerned.

Then after a few years it was thought by another group of advisers to the Office of the Mayor and the Governor, that the business of the Supreme Court, here again, because of the multitude of indictments that were coming in, was getting so large that we needed to split it into two sections. And this would call for two administrators. The court then, around 1972, was split between the civil and the criminal jurisdictions. Administratively the court could not be split other than that because of constitutional provisions. But it was administratively split so that one group of judges and an administrator would handle criminal matters and one group of judges and an administrator would handle civil matters.

I was assigned to preside over the civil term of the court, where I am today. Judge John Sandifer presides over the criminal term of the Supreme Court, bearing in mind that we are all one court constitutionally. But we are split because of the large number of judges, the immense number of matters that are brought before our court, both civil and criminal, the huge volume of indictments that come into being every year, pl us the case 1oad of major civi1 1itigations. For example, there's not an airplane crash anywhere in the world that some phase of it doesn't wind up in the courts of New York State. This is primarily because we are the hub of the world's major law firms, banking industries, the insurance companies, etc. Therefore, litigation will occur and begin whether or not it started here originally.

In order to fully understand our role within the Supreme Court, I think a word might be said about our entire court structure within the state of New York. Our highest court in New York State is known as the Court of Appeals. The Court of Appeals then is a single court having seven members who sit in bank. Under the Court of Appeals there are four appellate divisions operating in what we call four departments of government: that is, the judicial side of the government. And in New York City, as I've indicated earlier, two of these departments, since New York City has approximately one-half of the state's population and one-half of its problems. There are also two appellate divisions outside of New York City, the Third Department and the Fourth Department.

Below the Appellate Courts we then move into the Supreme Court, the court of which I am the administrator of it's civil term. Here we find a trial court of unlimited Law & Equity jurisdiction, unlimited in the sense that a suit in any amount of money will lie here. A criminal matter of any nature will lie here, as distinct from two courts which are underneath us: the Civil Court and the Criminal Court.

The Civil Court has a limited Jurisdiction up to $10,000 and the Criminal Court has a jurisdiction only with respect to misdemeanors, minor infractions of the law, traffic matters and matters of this kind.

This in essence is our court system in New York State and it is in this system that I've been privileged to preside over its major trial court with unlimited jurisdiction for a large number of years. I think this more or less gives you the kind of background and the kind of work that we do for the State of New York and for its people.

Q: What constitutes a typical work day for you?

DUDLEY: Well, as an administrator with the responsibilities, I generally get to work about a quarter to nine in the morning. Our courts open at 9:30. The first thing we do is to field phone calls that come in from staff and judges with respect to the problems that they may have. They have problems pertaining to their staff: court reporters may not be in place; court officers may not be here. There's a necessity to move them about from other areas. A court may function only if it has its total complement. In every court we think of the judge as presiding, which is true, but the judge cannot preside without a clerk. He cannot preside without a court reporter to take the minutes of what happens during that session, because if you didn't have a court reporter, you'd have no transcript upon which to appeal. And generally, while you could operate probably without a court officer, it would be very difficult on the criminal side of our court for security reasons only. So any number of our early morning activities are around whether or not the pieces are in place.

And then the mail comes in and we begin to deal with the scores of items brought to our attention by lawyers pertaining to cases that they have with administrative requests. Half of these may be in the nature of complaints, not being able to get their case moved fast enough. And in all of these areas, the administrator has the responsibility, if it is a legitimate matter, and in most instances it is, to do something about them. Many of them

you do yourself; others you delegate to your assistants. This pretty much is a full day on the administrative side alone.

In addition to that, several years ago I decided that in order to keep up with the law and keep busy in the law itself, that I wanted to do other than administrative work and therefore I sought a role in the appellate term of our court, which deals with the cases of the civil and criminal court. I was appointed to the appellate term bench about 1972, and that's why I happen to be wearing two hats here: an administrator of the court and as well its presiding judge of the appellate term.

In this role we sit twice a month on the first two Mondays of each month and handle about fifty cases in which we must read the briefs and the records. We hear the cases, hear the arguments in the court room and then we meet in session among ourselves to discuss these cases and write our decisions. This is a part of my activity that is very stimulating.

I think that about sums up my work as I see it except for the fact that involved in this there are always a series of meetings with other areas of the judicial systems, the supervisors who preside over us, those persons who run it under us, and it's necessary to communicate in this area just as you would in the industrial world: by way of meetings. And we do that. A number of such meetings are statewide and countywide and also locally within the building itself. And it's a pretty full-time operation. In the evenings, three or four nights in each month, we're out in bar association's meetings and other relevant activities pertaining to the court's work.

Q: Are there any similarities between what you're doing now and the work you were doing as Ambassador?

DUDLEY: Well, very decidedly. In fact, in almost all of my areas of work there have been similarities primarily because I have been thrown into the administrative arena. And running a court system is not too different from running an embassy that has a large coterie of persons who are doing other than diplomatic work, such as we had in the Point

Four Program, where we had engineers, educators and public health people to manage. In the court system you have union contracts to deal with; you have union employees' grievances to deal with; and you have time and leave records to deal with. We have that in the Borough President's office. In the Borough President's office we also dealt with policy matters pertaining to the city. Here we deal with policy matters pertaining to the court. In the State Department you deal with policy matters pertaining to the United States foreign relations. So there's a great many similarities in these jobs. There are a number of similarities in all of the areas of government: executive, judicial and legislative. The Speaker of the House, I'm sure, has many administrative responsibilities because it is his responsibility to see that the huge staff that the Assembly and the Senate would have is in place and that all of the problems surrounding them on a daily basis are overseen by one individual. And this is true whether you're in the judiciary, the executive branch of the government or the legislative branch. So there are these similarities, and in my case they have been primarily of an administrative nature.

Q: You've had an extraordinary life by any standards, sir, and you received honors, many honors from individuals, from institutions, among them the University of Liberia, I understand, Morgan State, Johnson C. Smith. Would you talk a little about those?

DUDLEY: Well, its difficult to talk about them without also indicating that it's impossible to go through these kinds of roles without receiving some brickbats, and I would not recommend anyone who has a thin skin at all to get involved in this kind of thing. I remember a few years ago when I was in the Borough President's office and associated with Mayor Wagner, there came a time within our administration that every cab driver was saying what a bum Mayor Wagner was, because there was dissatisfaction over some policy of the government at that particular time. And all of this is mirrored in editorials in your newspapers, and it can be very uncomfortable. And that particular case, it's interesting to note, that when Wagner was out of office and the next man came in, he hadn't been in over six months and the people were praising Wagner saying we ought to have him back. Well, this is the same way it is with the situation that we're in. Obviously

one who is fortunate enough to have had the opportunities that I have had sees many bright spots and must be pleased with the opportunity to serve the people not only of his country, but of the world. But the honors that you receive such as Morgan State, and Johnson C. Smith and many others ... I was, for example, first of all, before I even got out of school, a member of the Law Review staff in my law school. And the Law Review staff is comprised of that top percentage of students who are able to put together the student magazine and write leading articles on various subjects of your specialty for your school paper. And you get a key which is comparable to some of the keys in other institutions and it's called Law Review. Well, I started out with this kind of honor and I never let it go to my. head. I never wore the key, as some people do, on a chain around their girth. In fact, I had had it forty years. And one day I pulled it out and showed it to my wife and she said that she didn't know I was a member of the Law Review and she never would have thought it.

Well, this may very well be true, but I would say that to you that most officials who have been would receive these kind of honors. The institutions that give the honors, they've got to give them to somebody and this is their role to give the honors out if you're there at that particular time. It's like, you know, before Africa was decolonized. They said that an American was going through the heart of Africa once and saw an Englishman sitting on a campstool fanning himself in the hot sun and said, “What are you doing here ?” And the Englishman says, “Well, somebody's got to do it and this year it's my turn.” And that's the way it more or less stacks up, that you happen to be at the right place at the right time, and if you haven't done anything to embarrass yourself, you'll probably get an honor.

Q: That's a very modest way of putting it, sir.

DUDLEY: But true.

Q: If you were addressing a group of young people who express an interest in going into Foreign Service, what advice would you offer them?

DUDLEY: Well, that's pretty easy to answer. And it may not necessarily be the thing that triggers the opportunity. As I've indicated, there have been many things, particularly among black youths, that have triggered opportunities in the past. First of all , we've been in an area when far too few things have triggered any opportunities . And it may be a little different today as we move in on the eve of, not necessarily the eve, but on the aftermath of history and we find that hundreds now have tread these grounds that we're talking about.

I would suppose we would first of all even start with the younger students and indicate that they must stay in school. None of these things can be accomplished today without a proper education and background and degrees. This is the kind of society in which we live in, as in the teaching profession. Early on it became apparent that the teacher, no matter how good she was, and in the olden days I used to have a teacher who taught me geography in the 7th grade, and I think she was the equal of any teacher in the world, at least I thought so at the time. And this teacher had never been anywhere except probably normal school. But in the profession early on they found you needed a master's degree. And then those who wanted to really go forward and teach in the university, they found that they needed a Ph.D.

It will depend upon which road the student wants to take as to how far he should go in getting this kind of background. And the fact that some few will slip through as dropouts, and some few do, but this is primarily in the economic world. The economic world has not been so stringent in its requirements as has the academic world. There've been thousands of so-called self-made people, and I could name some that come into being every year right here in New York State. There are black people as well as white people who have made fortunes in the automobile agency areas and have become real key people in their communities. The others who have done likewise are in many forms of business.

But there are very few who can get to the top in either government or educational opportunities or the professions unless they have gotten that background. And following

that, if you're interested in getting into the Foreign Service, for example, then you must contact the State Department and find out when they are giving their examinations. Very few people are appointed at the top nowadays. You must move up through the ranks, and there are thousands of young people who do move up as Foreign Service officers from grade to grade to grade. But you must first, if you're interested in that, a language would be very helpful: Spanish, French or Italian or something like that, or any kind of language. If you had Russian you'd be assured of a job. So these are the things I would say to the young people and, as I indicated, starting with the youngest, that they must stay in and those who are in the kind of specialties that they must move into in order to cap their career.

Q: If you had the opportunity to serve as an ambassador at this time, would you be interested?

DUDLEY: I don't think so, and this is not the fox and the sour grapes, but it's just that I've tailored my career in a different direction and at my age, one of the most important things is the kind of pension that I'm going to have and so forth and so on. As I move from one year to another I am sort of cementing the kind of pension that I know that will be good for me and my family. And the career employee, as I have been almost all my life, has to rely upon that, and this the only kind of estate that you really are able to amass, that is a good pension because there is no one who works only for salary who can get rich doing that kind of thing. Not that that is any particular thing that we're looking for, but it's a factor when you begin to look around and say whether I'll move from this job to that or another. In fact, someone once criticized me in the newspaper that I had held so many jobs and maybe it was because I couldn't hold any, and that I was what they called “kicked upstairs” each time. Well, be that as it may, I indicated earlier that you have to take the knocks as well as the honors with this job so you shrug that of, shake it off and go home and explain to your family and explain to them not to get aggrieved over this sort of thing, that you're in public life and if you're in public life, you have to accept not only the public plaudits but the

brickbats as well. My personality has been able to withstand it over these years, and at my age I consider myself extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to do so.

Q: Judge Dudley, it's been a great pleasure meeting you and an honor also to help you record your recollections. I think we have basically covered the material that we set out to cover. We've recorded a tremendous amount of material on your life. We look forward to adding to this record at any time if you would like.

DUDLEY: Well, I might say that there may be many things that are in existence that we haven't covered. If there's anyone who is interested, I could only point to the Amistad records located in New Orleans at the present time, because over a long number of years I have sent various documents to them for recording and the kind of project that you are involved in now, and among them a kind of diary that I kept while I was with the Borough President's office as Borough President of Manhattan. For example, there are thousands of newspaper clippings about things that we were actively participating in on a day-to-day basis. As a borough president you are very close to the mayor; you're on the board of estimates, and there's hardly anything that happens in your borough that doesn't concern you. At that time we were involved in building overpasses at Columbia University to tie the campuses together. We were involved in maintaining the city streets, a service which has since been centralized, and I think they made a mistake. We were involved in making speeches, fifteen and twenty a week. Probably every supermarket or whatever that was open the Borough President was called on to cut the ribbon and make certain remarks. Whether there was a housing project in your borough that was underway, you were there with your foot on the shovel to throw the first bit of dirt from the ground.

We did keep these clippings over a period of several years and I turned this entire matter over to Amistad at that time.

During that period there, there was quite a bit going on in New York, and it's impossible in the kind of oral interview that we've been engaged in to cover all of this. Impossible. We

can only talk in broad generalities. And I might say here that it's been a great pleasure to have participated in this interview. And I've been very comfortable with you, Miss Tutt, hearing your questions and watching the reaction by you to some of my answers. And I want to thank you again for this opportunity.

Q: Thank you. Would you like to tell how long the papers have been at Amistad and how you happened to select Amistad for them?

DUDLEY: Well, I didn't exactly select Amistad. Some of the other black people at that time had already been approached by Clifton Johnson. Clifton Johnson was the director of this kind of activity at Fisk University back in the fifties, and he approached me and asked if I was interested in this. I suppose I became interested because no one else had approached me. And I did. And I knew Fisk. In fact, my school, Johnson C. Smith University — I went to a black school in the South — and we had had some contact with Fisk. I was probably influenced by that.

Following Fisk, the operation moved to New Orleans and became a part of Dillard. Lately they have their own building there which they've taken over and they are completely independent as a result of, I suppose, bequests, contributions that have been made. So I considered it. There are thousands of blacks who have gone in there, they have gone after, and have been very successful in this primarily through the efforts of Mr. Johnson. That's how I got involved with it. In fact, I hear from him once or twice a year now asking my advice with respect to bringing others in and asking if there's anything new in my own area that he would like to have or should have. So that's my contact with this news gathering historical publishing operation, which I think bodes well for the future.

Phelps-Stokes Foundation has had a rather different objective over the years, and it's good that it gets into this phase of it because you're doing something that they haven't done. Capturing this kind of thing on tape can be extremely helpful. We have another group in New York City who are doing the sort of thing that Amistad is doing. It is up

on 135th Street in Harlem. And that's beginning to expand. So sooner or later, I would suppose by 1990, the year 2000, we will have captured about as much as we can from the old records (and there wasn't much there to start with that was written) and then we will begin to build on what's come along in the 20th century.

But one of the problems that we in America as blacks have had is that we didn't have a history. In Africa, this is all too apparent. There was nothing written of the tremendous operations that were going on over there. A lot of it has been pieced together through archaeology, diggings and finding out the kind of things that people were doing ,and you put together the kind of civilization that they must have had. But when I was coming through school, we all knew about Booker T. Washington, and about Frederick Douglass, and a few people like this, and Benjamin Banneker, who was supposed to have invented the clock, and people such as that. But there are so many people in our society who knew the tales and so forth that were carried down through their grandparents. In fact, I think I had mentioned to you that an uncle of mine, contemporary in the sense that he was only one generation removed, was born in 1860, and that was a long time ago. A generation, you know, can be twenty years. I was born way up in the 20th century, not way up, but considerably past the first ten years or so, and this man was born 1860. So in the long run the sort of things that Phelps-Stokes is doing now and the others are also doing is going to be good for scholars. It's going to be good for students. It's going to be good for those who want to write on the subject and those who want to do the research necessary to bring them up-to-date as to what happened and what people were doing, and that's how we build on things.

You've mentioned that I was the first ambassador of color from this country here, and this is quite true. But shortly after I became an ambassador there were at least ten others within the next ten-fifteen years, all throughout Africa and other areas, and what not. Not only Africa. I think Brud Holland went to Norway and there were many others who came right after that. And as we've discussed here earlier with you, the difficulties in getting staff, non-top people out of the black area, we now find them everywhere. And this interview

pinpoints just how we got them out of that area. This is important because so often our people take this for granted. And one of the things that you said: what do I talk to young people about? One of the things that I've been happy to do right here in New York City whenever February comes around and there is some stirring about Negro History Week, we generally get calls from the schools to come and talk to the youngsters about Negro history. First of all, they don't know anything about the court and they know less about our Foreign Service, the State Department, and so forth. I have always participated. I've always gone. I've never said no. And I think this year, for the first time, I didn't get any invitations. But I think this is a mistake. I think our school people should continue to do this kind of thing, those who can. We have had many here who have done it over the years. They've had Connie Motley, Thurgood Marshall, before that myself and Frank Williams and many others who have been fortunate enough to have been in positions of breaking new ground, so to speak, to talk to them about how it was done and that don't at all feel that you can't achieve it because everyone of us who got anywhere got there, as I indicated to you, by happenstance, by being in the right place at the right time, by being educated enough to be able to take care of a situation once you got into the right place. Therefore, when you say this, you open up a vista to these young people that they may not have thought about and they say , “Well, if he could have done it this way, well, I could do it, too.”

Q: Are you continuing to send your papers to Amistad?

DUDLEY: Yes, in the sense that there are not many to send. Sometimes an order will come through which gives me a little different responsibility, that increases my responsibilities. Then I'll send a copy of that. That I did when I was made presiding judge to the appellate term. I had been an administrator then and I think I sent that order down. But I don't send my routine work down. These are the kind of decisions that are in the law journal and published every single week and there's no need to send that; that's a matter

of record. There's not much now happening to me that I would be sending down or that they would be interested in.

I am not in a position to take the numerous speaking engagements that I once did, nor do I want to. I have sort of fulfilled that part of my life, and my work load now won't permit of it. So I don't accept that, while at one time I would probably make as many as twenty-five speeches a week, in the afternoons, in the mornings, in the nights. If you're campaigning, sometimes, you may make as many as five-ten in one day. Well , you don't do that any more because that in itself is a means to an end. Everybody wants to see the candidate, and you have to be here, and you have to be in Brooklyn and what not.

I happen to be a fair-skinned black person, and on one occasion I was campaigning in Brooklyn. And in front of a nursing home one old white lady says to me, “I hear there's a nigger running,” and I said, “There sure is and I hope he wins.” You encounter this kind of thing all along and you do all through your life. But here again, as I was indicating about the other kind of brickbats, you take all of this in stride, because those of us who were, again, in the civil rights struggle — and I hate to be repetitive — we knew how to combat this. We knew where the protest should be and we did it. We were part of it and we were very fortunate to be part of it. So when these slights come on a personal and individual basis, we don't stop to make war on that particular individual or that particular subject matter. You better have a good sense of humor about a lot of this and keep moving and what not, because a lot of these people who can't help themselves, they're the ones that feel sorry for themselves. That's it.

End of interview